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MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN

THEOPHILE GAUTIER

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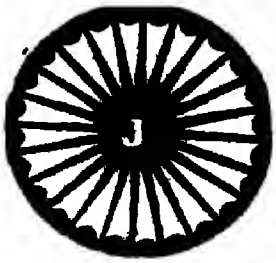

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MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN

1956.

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This edition has been shortened for modern readers. There has been no digesting or rewriting. The text has been kept as the author wrote it in his own words but deletions have been made to sharpen the narrative and quicken the pace.

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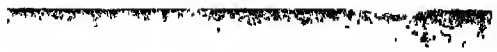

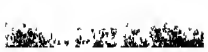

"You complain, my dear friend, of the scarcity of my letters. What would you have me write, except that I am well, and that I have ever the same affection for you? These are things of which you are quite aware, and which are so natural, considering my age, and the excellent qualities to be discerned in you, that it is almost ridiculous to send a wretched sheet of paper on a journey of a hundred miles with no more information than that. All my seeking is in vain, I have no news worth relating; my life is the most uniform in the world, and nothing comes to disturb its monotony. To-day is followed by to-morrow, just as yesterday was followed by to-day; and, without being so conceited as to play the prophet, I can in the morning boldly predict what will befall me in the evening.

"You have been my friend from childhood, and I was brought up with you; our lives were passed together for a long time, and we are wont to tell each other our most secret thoughts. I can therefore, without blushing, give you an account of all the nonsense that passes through my idle brain. I shall neither add, nor deduct a single word, for I have no false pride with you. And so I shall be scrupulously exact, even in trifling and shameful matters; I shall certainly not veil myself before *you*.

"I am twenty-two years old, and I am not virgin. Alas! no one is so now at that age, either in body, or, what is much worse in heart. Besides, consorting with the class of females who afford us pleasure for payment, and are not to be counted any more than a lascivious dream, I have gained over several virtuous or nearly virtuous women, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither young nor old, such as are to be met with by young fellows who have nothing regular on hand and whose hearts are unoccupied. With a little goodwill, and a pretty strong dose of romantic illusions, you can call this having a mistress, if you like. For myself, I find

it impossible; I might have a thousand of the kind, and I should still believe my desire as unfulfilled as ever.

"I have not, therefore, as yet had a mistress, and my whole desire is to have one. It is an idea that torments me strangely; it is not an effervescence of temperament, a boiling of the blood, the first burst of puberty. It is not *woman* that I want, but *a* woman, a mistress; I desire one, and shall have one shortly; if I did not succeed, I confess to you that I should never get over it, and that I should have an inward timidity, a dull discouragement, which would exercise a serious influence upon the rest of my life. I should consider myself defective in certain respects, inharmonious or incomplete, deformed in mind or body; for after all my requirement is a just one, and nature owes it to every man. So long as I have not attained my end, I shall look upon myself merely as a child, and I shall not have the confidence in myself which I ought to have. A mistress is to me what the *toga virilis* was to the young Roman.

"I see so many beautiful women in the possession of men who are ignoble in every respect, and scarcely fit to be their lackeys, that I blush for them, and for myself. It gives me a pitiful opinion of women to see them wasting their affection on blackguards who despise and deceive them, instead of giving themselves to some loyal and sincere young fellow who would esteem himself very fortunate, and would worship them on his knees; to myself, for instance. It is true that men of the former species obstruct the drawing-rooms, show themselves off before every one, and are always lounging on the back of some easy chair, while I remain at home, my forehead pressed against the window pane, watching the river steam and the mist rise, while silently erecting in my heart the perfumed sanctuary, the marvellous temple in which I am to lodge the future idol of my soul. A chaste and poetical occupation, and one for which women are as little grateful to you as may be.

"Women have little liking for dreamers, and peculiarly esteem those who put their ideas into practice. After all, they are right. Obliged by their education and their social

position to keep silence and to wait, they naturally prefer those who come to them and speak, and thus relieve them from a false and tiresome position. I am quite sensible of this; yet never in my life shall I be able to take it upon me, as I see many others do, to rise from my seat, cross a drawing-room, and say unexpectedly to a woman: 'Your dress becomes you like an angel,' or: 'Your eyes are particularly bright this evening.'

"All this does not prevent me from positively wanting a mistress. I do not know who it will be, but I see none among the women of my acquaintance who could suitably fill this dignified position. I find that they possess very few of the qualities I require. Those who would be young enough are wanting in beauty or intellectual charm; those who are beautiful and young are basely and forbiddingly virtuous, or lack the necessary freedom; and then there is always some husband, some brother, a mother or an aunt, somebody or other, with big eyes and large ears, who must be wheeled or thrown out of the window. Every rose has its worm, and every woman has a swarm of relations who must be carefully cleared away, if we wish to pluck some day the fruit of her beauty. There is not one of them, even to country cousins of the third degree, whom we have never seen, that does not wish to preserve the spotless purity of their dear cousin in all its whiteness. This is nauseous, and I shall never have the patience to pull up all the weeds, and lop away all the briars which fatally obstruct the approaches to a pretty woman.

"I am not fond of mammas, and I like young girls still less. Further, I must confess that married women have but a very slight attraction for me. They involve a confusion and a mingling which are revolting to me; I cannot tolerate the idea of division. The woman who has a husband and a lover is a prostitute for one of them, and often for both; and, besides, I could never consent to yield the first place to another. My natural pride cannot stoop to such a degradation. I shall never go because another man is coming. Though the woman were to be compromised and lost, and we were to fight with knives each with a foot upon her body,

I should remain. Private staircases, cupboards, closets, and all the machinery for deception would be of little service with me.

"I am not much smitten with what is called maidenly ingenuousness, youthful innocence, purity of heart, and other charming things which in verse are most effective; that I call simply nonsense, ignorance, imbecility, or hypocrisy. The maidenly ingenuousness which consists in sitting on the very edge of an easy chair, with arms pressed close to the body, and eyes fixed on the point of the corset, and in not speaking without permission from its grandparents, the innocence which has a monopoly of uncurled hair and white frocks, the purity of heart which wears its dress high up at the neck because it has as yet neither shoulders nor breast to show, do not, in truth, appear wonderfully agreeable to me.

"I do not care much for teaching little simpletons to spell out the alphabet of love. I am neither old enough nor depraved enough for that; besides, I should succeed badly at it, for I never could show anybody anything, even what I knew best myself. I prefer women who read fluently, we arrive sooner at the end of the chapter; and in everything, but especially in love, the end is what we have to consider. In this respect, I am rather like those people who begin a novel at the wrong end, read the catastrophe first of all, and then go backwards to the first page. This mode of reading and loving has its charm. Details are relished more when we are at peace concerning the end, and the inversion introduces the unforeseen.

"Young girls then, and married women are excluded from the category. It must, therefore, be among the widows that we are to choose our divinity. Alas! though nothing else is left to us, I greatly fear that neither will they afford us what we wish.

"I do not think that an aversion so well founded admits of any serious reply. It is not that I consider widows altogether devoid of charm, when they are young and pretty and have not yet laid aside their mourning. They have little languishing airs, little ways of letting the arms droop, of arching the

neck and of bridling up like unmated turtle-doves; a heap of charming affectations sweetly veiled beneath the transparency of crape, a well-ordered affectation of despair, skilfully managed sighs, and tears which fall so opportunely and lend such lustre to the eyes!

"And now I hear you say: Whom will you take then? You will not have young girls, nor married women, nor widows. You do not like mammas, and I do not suppose that you are any fonder of grandmothers. Whom the deuce *do* you like? It is the answer to the charade, and if I knew it, I should not torment myself so much. Up to the present, I have never loved any woman, but I have loved and do love—*love*. Although I have had no mistresses, and the women that I have had have merely kindled desire, I have felt, and I am acquainted with love itself. I have not loved this woman or that, one more than another; but some one whom I have never seen, who must live somewhere, and whom I shall find, if it please God. I know well what she is like, and, when I meet her, I shall recognise her.

"I have often pictured to myself the place where she dwells, the dress that she wears, the eyes and hair that she has. I hear her voice; I should recognise her step among a thousand, and if, by chance, some one uttered her name, I should turn round; it is impossible that she should not have one of the five or six names that I have given her in my head.

"She is twenty-six years old, neither more nor less. She is not without experience, and she is not yet satiated. It is a charming age for making love as it ought to be, without childishness and without libertinism. She is of medium height. I like neither a giantess nor a dwarf. I wish to be able to carry my goddess by myself from the sofa to the bed; but it would be disagreeable to have to look for her in the latter. When raising herself slightly on tiptoe, her mouth should reach my kiss. That is the proper height. As to her figure, she is rather plump than thin. I am something of the Turk in this matter, and I should scarcely like to meet with a corner when I expected a circumference; a woman's skin should be well filled, her flesh compact and firm, like the pulp of a peach that is nearly ripe: and the mistress I shall

have is made just so. She is a blonde with dark eyes, white like a blonde, with the colour of a brunettee, and a red and sparkling smile. The lower lip rather large, the eyeball swimming in a flood of natural moisture, her breast round, small, and firm, her hands long and plump, her walk undulating like a snake standing on its tail, her hips full and yielding, her shoulders broad, the nape of her neck covered with down; a style of beauty at once delicate and compact, graceful and healthy, poetic and real; a subject of Giorgione's wrought by Rubens.

"Here is her costume: she wears a robe of scarlet or black velvet, with slashings of white satin or silver cloth, an open bodice, a large ruff *à la* Medici, a felt hat capriciously drawn up like Helena Systerman's, and with long feathers curled and crisp, a golden chain or a stream of diamonds about her neck, and a quantity of large, variously enamelled rings on all her fingers.

"I will not excuse her a ring or a bracelet. Her robe must be literally of velvet or brocade; at the very most, I might permit her to stoop to satin. I would rather rumple a silk skirt than a linen one, and let pearls and feathers fall from the hair than natural flowers or a simple bow; I know that the lining of a linen skirt is often at least as tempting as that of a silk one, but I prefer the silk one.

"Thus, in my dreams, I have given myself as mistresses many queens, many empresses, many princesses, many sultanas, many celebrated courtesans, but never a commoner or a shepherdess; and amid my most vagrant desires, I have never taken advantage of any one on a carpet of grass or in a bed of serge d'Aumale. I consider beauty a diamond which should be mounted and set in gold. I cannot imagine a beautiful woman without a carriage, horses, serving-men, and all that belongs to an income of four thousand a year: there is a harmony between beauty and wealth. One requires the other: a pretty foot calls for a pretty shoe, a pretty shoe calls for a carpet, and a carriage, and all the rest of it. A beautiful woman, poorly dressed and in a mean house, is, to my mind, the most painful sight that one could see, and I could not feel love towards

such a one. It is only the handsome and the rich who can make love without being ridiculous or pitiable. At this rate few people would be entitled to make love: I myself should be the first to be excluded; but such is nevertheless my opinion.

"You will, at all events, admit that when I go in for romance, it is not by halves that I do so, and that I am as foolish as it is possible to be. It is always so, for there is nothing in the world more disagreeable than folly with reason in it. You will almost admit that when I write letters they are volumes rather than simple notes. In everything, I like what goes beyond ordinary limits. That is the reason why I am fond of you. Do not laugh too much at all the nonsense I have scribbled to you: I am laying my pen aside in order to put it into practice; for I ever come back to the same refrain: I want to have a mistress. I do not know whether it will be the lady of the park or the beauty of the balcony, but I bid you good-bye that I may commence my quest. My resolution is taken. Should she, whom I seek, be concealed in the remotest part of the kingdom of Cathay or Samarcand, I shall manage to find her out. I will let you know of the success or failure—I hope it will be the success—of my enterprise. Pray for me, my dear friend. For my own part, I am putting on my finest coat, and am leaving the house determined not to return without a mistress in accordance with my ideas. I have been dreaming long enough; to action now.

"I HAVE without doubt hastened too much: my hour has not come; God, who has lent me life, will not take it back from me before I have lived. To what end give a lyre without strings to a poet, or a life without love to a man? God could not do such an inconsistent thing; and no doubt He

will, at His chosen time, place in my path her whom I am to love, and by whom I am to be loved. But why has love come to me before the mistress? Why am I thirsty, yet without the spring at which to quench my thirst? or why can I not fly like the birds of the desert to the spot where there is water? The world is to me a Sahara without wells or date-trees. I have not a single shady nook in my life where I can screen myself from the sun: I endure all the fervour of passion without its raptures and unspeakable delights; I know its torments, and am without its pleasures. I am jealous of what does not exist; I am disquieted by the shadow of a shadow; I heave sighs which have no motive; I suffer sleeplessness which no worshipped phantom comes to adorn; I shed tears which flow to the ground without being dried; I give to the winds kisses which are not returned; I wear out my eyes trying to grasp in the distance an uncertain and deceitful form; I wait for what is not to come, and I count the hours anxiously, as though I had an appointment to keep.

"Whoever thou art, angel or demon, maid or courtesan, shepherdess or princess, whether thou comest from the north or from the south, thou whom I know not, and whom I love! oh! force me not to wait longer for thee, or the flame will consume the altar, and thou wilt find in the place of my heart but a heap of cold ashes. Descend from the sphere where thou art; leave the crystal skies, consoling spirit, and come thou to cast the shadow of thy mighty wings upon my soul. Come thou, woman whom I will love, that I may close about thee the arms that have been open for so long. Let the golden doors of the palace wherein she dwells turn on their hinges; let the humble latch of her cottage rise; let the branches in the woods and the briars of the wayside untwine themselves; let the enchantments of the turret and the spells of the magicians be broken; let the ranks of the crowd be opened up to suffer her to pass through.

"If thou comest too late, O my ideal! I shall not have the power left to love thee. My soul is like a dovecote full of doves. At every hour of the day there flies forth some desire. The doves return to the cote, but desires return not to the

heart. The azure of the sky becomes white with their countless swarms; they pass away, through space, from world to world, from clime to clime, in quest of some love where they may perch and pass the night: Hasten thy step, O my dream! or thou wilt find in the empty nest but the shells of the birds that have flown away.

"My friend, companion of my childhood, to you alone could I relate such things as these. Write to me that you pity me, and that you do not reckon me a hypochondriac; afford me comfort, for never did I need it more: how enviable are those who have a passion which they can satisfy! The drunkard never encounters cruelty in his bottle. He falls from the tavern into the kennel, and is more happy on his heap of filth than a king upon his throne. The sensualist goes to courtesans for facile amours or shameless refinements. A painted cheek, a short petticoat, a naked breast, a licentious speech, and he is happy; his eye grows white, his lip is wet; he attains the last degree of his happiness, he feels the rapture of his coarse voluptuousness. The gamester has need but of a green cloth and a pack of greasy and worn-out cards to obtain the keen pangs, nervous spasms, and diabolical enjoyments of his horrible passion. Such people as these may be sated or amused; but that is impossible for me.

"This idea has so taken possession of me that I no longer love the arts, and poetry has no longer any charm for me. What formerly transported me, makes not the least impression on me.

"I begin to believe that I am in the wrong, and that I am asking more from nature and society than they can give. What I seek has no existence, and I ought not to complain for having failed to find it. Yet if the woman of our dreams is impossible to the conditions of human nature, what is it that causes us to love her only and none other, since we are men, and our instinct should be an infallible guide? Who has given us the idea of this imaginary woman? From what clay have we formed this invisible statue? Whence took we the feathers that we have placed on the back of this chimera? What mystic bird placed unnoted in some dark corner of our soul the egg from which there has come forth our dream?

What is this abstract beauty which we feel but cannot define? Why, in the presence of some woman who is often charming, do we sometimes say that she is beautiful, while we think her very ugly?

"Where is the model, the type, the inward pattern which affords us the standard of comparison?—for beauty is not an absolute idea, and it can be estimated only by contrast. Have we seen it in the skies,—in a star,—at a ball, under a mother's shadow, the fresh bud of a leafless rose? Was it in Italy or in Spain? Was it here or was it there, yesterday or a long time ago? Was it the worshipped courtesan, the fashionable singer, the prince's daughter? A proud and noble head bending beneath a weighty diadem of pearls and rubies? A young and childish face stooping among the nasturtiums and bindweeds at the window? To what school belonged that picture in which this beauty stood out white and radiant amid the dark shadows? Was it Raphaël who caressed the outline that pleases you? Was it Cleomenes who polished the marble that you adore? Are you in love with a Madonna or a Diana? Is your ideal an angel, a sylphid, or a woman?

"Alas! it is something of all this, and yet it is not this.

"I have given myself up nicely to lyrics, my dear friend, and I have now been writing bombast for some time absurdly enough. All this is very remote from our subject, which is, if I remember rightly, the glorious and triumphant history of the Chevalier d'Albert in his pursuit of the most beautiful princess in the world, as the old romances say. But in truth the history is so meagre that I am obliged to have recourse to digressions and reflections. I hope that it will not be always so, and that the romance of my life will before long be more tangled and complicated than a Spanish imbroglio.

"After wandering from street to street, I determined to go to one of my friends who was to introduce me to a house where, I was told, a world of pretty women were to be seen—a collection of real ideals, enough to satisfy a score of poets. There were some to suit every taste—aristocratic beauties with eagle looks, sea-green eyes, straight noses, proudly elevated chins, royal hands, and the walk of a goddess; silver

lilies mounted on stalks of gold; simple violets of pale colour and sweet perfume, with moist and downcast eye, frail neck, and diaphanous flesh; lively and piquant beauties, affected beauties, and beauties of all sorts; for the house is a very seraglio, minus the eunuchs and the kislar aga.

"My friend tells me that he has already had five or six flames there—quite as many. This seems to me prodigious in the extreme, and I greatly fear that I shall not be equally successful; De C——pretends that I shall, and that I shall succeed beyond my wishes. According to him, I have only one fault, which will be cured by time and by mixing in society: it is that I esteem woman too much and women not enough. It is quite possible that there may be some truth in this. He says that I shall be quite lovable when I have got rid of this little oddity. God grant it! Women must feel that I despise them, for a compliment which they would think adorable and charming to the last degree in the mouth of another, angers and displeases them as much as the most cutting epigram when it proceeds from mine. This has probably some connection with what De C——objects to in me.

"My heart beat a little faster as I ascended the staircase, and I had scarcely recovered from my emotion when De C——, nudging me with his elbow, brought me face to face with a woman of about thirty years of age, rather handsome, attired with heavy luxury and an extreme affectation of childish simplicity, which, however, did not prevent her from being plastered with red paint like a coach wheel. It was the lady of the house.

"De C——, assuming that shrill, mocking voice so different from his customary tones, and which he makes use of in society when he wishes to play the charmer, said to her, with many tokens of ironic respect, through which was visible the most profound contempt:

" 'This is the young fellow I spoke to you about the other day—a man of the most distinguished merit. He belongs to one of the best families, and I think that it cannot but be agreeable to you to receive him. I have therefore taken the liberty to introduce him to you.'

" 'You have certainly done quite right, sir,' replied the

lady, mincing in the most exaggerated fashion. Then she turned to me, and, after looking me over with the corner of her eye after the manner of a skilled connoisseur, and in a way that made me blush to the tips of my ears, said, 'You may consider yourself as invited once for all, and come as often as you have an evening to throw away.'

"I bowed awkwardly enough, and stammered out some unconnected words, which could not have given her a lofty opinion of my talents. The entrance of some other people released me from the irksomeness inseparable from an introduction, and De C—— drawing me into a corner of the window, began to lecture me soundly.

" 'The deuce! You are going to compromise me. I announced you as a phœnix of wit, a man of unbriddled imagination, a lyric poet, everything that is most transcendent and impassioned, and there you stand like a blockhead without uttering a word! What a miserable imagination! I thought your humour more fertile than that. But come, give your tongue the rein, and chatter right and left. You need not say sensible and judicious things; on the contrary, that might do you harm. Speak—that is the essential thing—speak much and long. Draw attention to yourself; cast aside all fear and modesty. Get it well into your head that all here are fools or nearly so, and do not forget that an orator who would succeed cannot despise his hearers enough. What do you think of the mistress of the house?'

" 'She displeases me considerably already; and, though I spoke to her for scarcely three minutes, I felt as bored as if I had been her husband.'

" 'Ah! is that what you think of her?'

" 'Why, yes.'

" 'Your dislike to her is then quite insurmountable? Well, so much the worse. It would have been only decent to have courted her if but for a month. It is the proper thing to do, and a respectable young fellow cannot be introduced into society except through her.'

" 'Well! I'll pay court to her.' I replied with a piteous air, 'since it is necessary. But is it so essential as you seem to think?'

" 'Alas! yes, it is most indispensable, and I am going to explain the reasons to you. Madame de Thémines is at present in vogue; she has all the absurdities of the day after a superior fashion, sometimes those of to-morrow, but never those of yesterday. She is quite in the swim. People wear what she wears, and she never wears what has been worn already. Furthermore she is rich, and her equipages are in the best taste. She has no wit, but much jargon; she has keen likings and little passion. People please her, but do not move her. She has a cold heart and a licentious head. As to her soul—if she has one, which is doubtful—it is of the blackest, and there is no wickedness or baseness of which it is incapable; but she is very dexterous, and she keeps up appearances just so far as is necessary to prevent anything being proved against her. She will grant her favours to a man without ado, but will not write him the simplest note. Accordingly her most intimate enemies can find nothing to say about her except that she rouges too highly, and that certain portions of her person have not in truth all the roundness that they seem to possess—which is false.'

" 'How do you know?'

" 'What a question! in the only way one knows things of the kind, by finding out for myself.'

" 'Then you've been intimate with Madame de Thémines?'

" 'Certainly! Why not? It would have been most unbecoming if I had not had her. She has been of great service to me, and I am very grateful for it.'

" 'I do not understand the nature of the services she can have rendered you.'

" 'Are you really a fool then?' said De C——, looking at me with the most comical air in the world. 'Upon my word, I am afraid so. Must I tell you the whole story? Madame de Thémines is reputed, and deservedly so, to have special knowledge on certain subjects, and a young man that she has taken up and favoured for a while may present himself boldly everywhere, and be sure that he will not remain for long without having an affair on hand, and two rather than one. Besides this unspeakable advantage, there is another no less important, which is, that as soon as the women of the

world here see that you are the recognised lover of Madame de Thémines, they will make it a pleasure and a duty, even if they have not the least liking for you, to carry you off from a woman who is the fashion as she is. Instead of the advances and proceedings that would have been necessary, you will not know where to choose, and you will of necessity become the object of all the allurements and affectations imaginable.

" 'Nevertheless, if she inspires you with too great a repugnance, do not take her. You are not exactly obliged to do so, though it would have been polite and proper. But make a choice quickly, and attack her who pleases you most, or who seems to afford you most facilities, for delay would lose you the benefit of novelty, and the advantage it gives you for a few days over all the cavaliers here. All these ladies have no conception of those passions which have their birth in intimacy, and develop slowly with respect and silence. They are for thunderbolts and occult sympathies—something marvellously well imagined to save the tedium of resistance, and all the prolixity and repetition which sentiment mingles with the romance of love, and which only serve to delay the conclusion uselessly. These ladies are very economical of their time, and it appears so precious to them that they would be grieved to leave a sinlge minute unemployed. They have a desire to oblige mankind, which cannot be too highly praised and they love their neighbour as themselves, which is quite according to the Gospel, and very meritorious. They are very charitable creatures, who would not for anything in the world cause a man to die of despair.

" 'There must be three or four already smitten in your favour, and I would advise you in a friendly way to pursue your point with spirit over these instead of amusing yourself gossiping with me in the embrasure of a window, which will not advance you to any great extent.'

" 'But, my dear De C——, I am quite new to this kind of thing. I am utterly without the power to distinguish at first sight a woman who is smitten from one who is not; and I might make strange blunders if you did not assist me with your experience.'

" 'You are really as primitive as you can be. I did not think that it was possible to be as pastoral and bucolic as that in the present blessed century! What the devil do you do, then, with the large pair of black eyes that you have there, and that would have the most crushing effect if you knew how to make use of them?

" 'Just look yonder a moment at that little woman in rose, playing with her fan in the corner near the fireplace. She has been eyeing you for a quarter of an hour with the most significant fixity and assiduity. There is not another in the world who can be indecent after such a superior fashion, and display such noble shamelessness. She is greatly disliked by the women who despair of ever attaining to such a height of impudence, but to compensate for this, she is greatly liked by the men, who find in her all the piquancy of a courtesan. She is in truth charmingly depraved, and full of wit, spirit, and caprice. She is an excellent preceptor for a young man with prejudices. In a week she will rid your conscience of all scruples, and corrupt your heart in such a way that you will never be a subject for ridicule or elegy. She has inexpressibly practical ideas about everything; she goes to the bottom of things with a swiftness and certainty that are astonishing. She is algebra incarnate, is that little woman. She is precisely what is needed by a dreamer and an enthusiast. She will soon cure you of your vapourish idealism, and she will do you a great service. She will moreover do it with the greatest pleasure, for it is an instinct with her to disenchant poets.'

"My curiosity being aroused by De C——'s description, I left my retreat, and gliding through the various groups, approached the lady, and looked at her with much attention. She was perhaps twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. Her figure was small, but well made, though somewhat inclined to embonpoint. Her arm was white and plump, her hand noble, her foot pretty and even too delicate, her shoulders full and glossy, and her bosom small, but what there was of it very satisfactory, and giving a favourable idea of the remainder. As to her hair, it was splendid in the extreme, of a blue black, like that of a jackdaw's wing. The corner of her

eye was turned up rather high towards the temple, her nose slender with very open nostrils, her mouth humid and sensual, a little furrow in the lower lip, and an almost imperceptible down where the upper was united to it. And with all this there was such life, animation, health, force, and such an indefinable expression of lust skilfully tempered with coquetry and intrigue, that she was in short a very desirable creature, and more than justified the eager likings which she had inspired and still inspired every day.

"I wished for her; but I nevertheless understood that, agreeable as she was, she was not the woman who would realise my desire, and make me say, 'At last I have a mistress!'

"I returned to De C——and said to him: 'I like the lady well enough, and I shall perhaps make arrangements with her. But before saying anything definite and binding, I should be very glad if you would be kind enough to point me out these indulgent beauties who had the goodness to be smitten with me, so that I may make a choice. It would please me, too, seeing that you are acting as demonstrator to me here, if you would add a little account of them with the nomenclature of their qualities and their defects, the manner in which they should be attacked, and the tone to adopt with them in order that I may not look too much like a provincial or an author.'

" 'Willingly,' said De C——. 'Do you see that beautiful, melancholy swan, displaying her neck so harmoniously, and moving her sleeves as though they were wings? She is modesty itself—everything that is chastest and most maidenly in the world. She has a brow of snow, a heart of ice, the looks of a Madonna, the smile of a simpleton, her dress is white, and her soul is the same. She puts nothing but orange-blossoms or leaves of the water-lily in her hair, and she is connected with the earth only by a thread. She has never had an evil thought, and she is profoundly ignorant of how a man differs from a woman. The Holy Virgin is a Bacchante beside her, which, however, does not prevent her from having had more lovers than any other woman of my acquaintance, and that is saying a good deal. Just examine this discreet person's bosom for a moment, it is a little masterpiece, and

it is really difficult to show so much while hiding more. Say, is she not, with all her restrictions and all her prudery, ten times more indecent than that good lady on her left, who is making a grand show of two hemispheres, which, if they were joined together, would make a map of the world of natural size, or than the other on her right, whose dress is open almost to her stomach, and who is parading her nothingness with charming intrepidity?

" 'This maidenly creature, if I am not greatly mistaken, has already computed in her head the amount of love and passion promised by your paleness and black eyes, and what makes me say so is the fact that she has not once, apparently at least, looked towards you; for she can move her eyes with so much art, and look out of the corner of them so skilfully, that nothing escapes her; one would think that she could see out of the back of her head, for she knows perfectly well what is going on behind her. She is a female Janus. If you would succeed with her you must lay swaggering and victorious manners aside. You must speak to her without looking at her, without making any movement, in an attitude of contrition, and in suppressed and respectful tones. In this way you may say to her what you will, provided it be suitably veiled, and she will allow you the greatest freedom at first of speech, and afterwards of action. Only be careful to look at her with tenderness when her own eyes are cast down, and speak to her of the sweets of platonic love and of the intercourse of the soul, while employing the least platonic and ideal pantomime in the world! She is very sensual and very susceptible; embrace her as much as you like; but, when most freely intimate with her, do not forget to call her *madame* two or three times in every sentence. She quarelled with me because when I was most intimate with her I addressed her familiarly when saying something or other. The devil! a woman is not virtuous for nothing.'

" 'I have no great desire to hazard the adventure, after what you have told me. A prudish Messalina! the union is monstrous and strange.'

"It is as old as the world, my dear fellow! It is to be seen everyday, and nothing is more common. You are wrong

not to have fixed upon her. She has one great charm, which is, that with her a man always seems to be committing mortal sin, and the least kiss appears perfectly damnable, while in the case of others he scarcely thinks the sin a venial one, and often even thinks nothing of it at all. That is why I kept her longer than any other mistress. I should have had her still if she had not left me herself. She is the only woman who has anticipated me, and I have a certain respect for her on that account. She has little voluptuous refinements of the most exquisite delicacy, and she possesses the great art of making it appear that she has wrested from her what she grants very willingly—a circumstance which gives each of her favours a peculiar charm. You will find in the world ten of her lovers who will swear to you on their honour that she is the most virtuous creature in existence. She is just the contrary. It is a curious study to anatomise virtue of that kind on a pillow. Being forewarned you will not run any risk, and you will not have the awkwardness to fall really in love with her.'

" 'And how old is this adorable person?' I asked, for, examining her with the most scrupulous attention, I found it impossible to determine her age.

" 'Ah! how old is she? That is just the mystery, and God alone knows. I who pique myself on telling a woman's age to within a minute have never been able to find out. I merely estimate approximately that she is perhaps from eighteen to thirty-six years of age. I have seen her in full dress, in dishabille, and less scantily clad, and I can tell you nothing with respect to this. My knowledge is at fault; the age which she seems particularly to be is eighteen, yet that cannot be the case. She has the body of a maiden and the soul of a gay woman, and to become so deeply and so speciously depraved, much time or genius is necessary; it is needful to have a heart of bronze in a breast of steel: she has neither one nor the other, and I therefore think that she is thirty-six; but practically I do not know.'

" 'Has she no intimate friend who could give you information on this point?'

" 'No. She arrived in this town two years ago. She came

from the country, or from abroad, I forget which—an admirable situation for a woman who knows how to turn it to account. With such a face as hers she might give herself any age she liked, and date only from the day that she arrived here.'

" 'Nothing could be more pleasant, especially when some impertinent wrinkle does not come to give you the lie, and time, the Great Destroyer, has the goodness to lend himself to this falsification of the certificate of baptism.'

"He showed me some others, who, according to him, would favourably receive all the petitions that it might please me to address to them, and would treat me with most particular philantrophy. But the woman in rose at the corner of the fire-place, and the modest dove who served as her antithesis, were incomparably better than all the rest; and if they had not all the qualities which I require, they had, in appearance at least, some of them.

"I conversed the whole evening with them, especially with the latter, and was careful to cast my ideas in the most respectful mould. Although she scarcely looked at me, I thought that I saw her eyes gleam sometimes beneath their curtain of eyelashes, and, when I ventured some rather lively gallantries, clothed, however, in most modest guise, a little blush, checked and suppressed, pass two or there lines below her skin, similar to that produced by a rose-coloured liquid when poured into a semi-opaque cup. Her replies were, in general, sober and circumspect, yet acute and full of point, and they suggested more than they expressed. All this was intermingled with omissions, hints, indirect allusions, each syllable having its purpose, and each silence its import. Nothing in the world could have been more diplomatic and more charming. And yet, whatever pleasure I may have taken in it for the moment, I could not keep up a conversation of the kind for long. One must be perpetually on the alert and on one's guard, and what I like best of all in a chat is freedom and familiarity.

"We spoke at first of music, which led us quite naturally to speak of the Opera, next of women, and then of love, a subject in which it is easier than in any other to find means

of passing from the general to the particular. We vied with each other in making love ; you would have laughed to listen to me. In truth, Amadis on the poor Roche was but a pedant without fire beside me. There was generosity, and abnegation, and devotion enough to cause the deceased Roman, Curtius, to blush for shame. I really did not think myself capable of such transcendent balderdash and bombast.

"I playing at the most quintessential Platonism—does it not strike you as a most facetious thing, as the best comedy scene that could be presented? And then, good heavens! the perfectly devout air, the little, demure, and hypocritical ways that I displayed! I looked most innocent, and any mother who had heard me reasoning would not have hesitated at all in letting me go about with her daughter, and any husband would have entrusted his wife to me. On that evening I appeared more virtuous, and was less so than ever in my life before. I thought that it was more difficult than that to play the hypocrite and to say things without in the least believing them. It must be easy enough, or I must be very apt to have succeeded so agreeably the first time. In truth, I have some fine moments.

"As to the lady, she said many things that were most ingeniously detailed, and which, in spite of the appearance of frankness which she threw into them, denoted the most consummate experience. You can form no idea of the subtlety of her distinctions. That woman would saw a hair into three parts lengthways, and would disconcert all the angelic and seraphic doctors. For the rest, she speaks in such a manner that it is impossible to believe that she has even the shadow of a body. She is immaterial, vaporous and ideal enough to make you break your arms, and if De C—— had not warned me about the ways of the animal, I should assuredly have despaired of success and have stood piteously aside. And when a woman tells you for two hours, with the most disengaging air in the world, that love lives only by privations and sacrifices, and other fine things of the sort, how the devil can you decently hope to persuade her some day to place herself in such a situation with you as will enable you to

discover whether you are both made alike?

"In short, we separated on very friendly terms, with reciprocal congratulations on the loftiness and purity of our sentiments.

"The conversation with the other one was, as you may imagine, of quite an opposite description. We laughed as much as we spoke. We made fun very wittily of all the women who were there; but I am mistaken when I say: 'We made fun of them very wittily.' I should have said that 'she' did so, for a man can never laugh effectively at a woman. For my part, I listened and approved, for it would have been impossible to draw a more lively sketch, or to colour it more highly. It was the most curious gallery of caricatures that I have ever seen. In spite of the exaggeration, one could see the truth underlying it. De C—— was quite right; the mission of this woman is to disenchant poets. She has about her an atmosphere of prose in which a poetical thought cannot live.

"She is charming and sparkling with wit, yet beside her one thinks only of base and vulgar things. While speaking to her I felt a crowd of desires incongruous and impracticable in the place where I was, such as to call for wine and get drunk, to place her on one of my knees and madly kiss her, to raise the hem of her skirt and see whether her ankle was slender or just the reverse, to sing a ribald refrain with all my might, to smoke a pipe, or to break the windows—in short, to do anything. All the animal part, all the brute, rose within me; I would willingly have spat on the Illiad of Homer; and I would have gone on my knees to a ham. I can now quite understand the allegory of the companions of Ulysses being changed into swine by Circe. Circe was probably some lively creature like my little woman in rose.

"Shameful to relate, I experienced great delight in feeling myself overtaken by brutishness; I made no resistance, but assisted it as much as I could—so natural is depravity to man, and so much mire is there in the clay of which he is formed.

"Yet for one moment I feared the canker that was seizing

upon me, and wished to leave my corrupter; but the floor seemed to have risen to my knees, and it was as though I were set fast in my place.

"At last I took it on me to leave her, and, the evening being far advanced, I returned home much perplexed and troubled, and without very well knowing what to do. I hesitated between the prude and her opposite, I found voluptuousness in one and piquancy in the other, and after a most minute and searching self-examination, I found, not that I loved them both, but that I wished sufficiently for them both, for one as much as for the other, to dream about them and be preoccupied with the thought of them.

"To all appearance, my friend, I shall gain over one of these women, and perhaps both; and yet I confess to you that the possession of them will only half satisfy me. It is not that they are not very pretty, but at sight of them nothing cried out within me, nothing panted, nothing said, 'It is they.' I did not recognise them. Nevertheless, I do not think that I shall meet with anything much better so far as birth and beauty are concerned, and De C—— advises me to go no further. I shall certainly take his advice, and one or other of them will be my mistress, or the devil will take me before very long; but at the bottom of my heart a secret voice reproaches me for being false to my love, and for stopping thus at the first smile of a woman for whom I care nothing, instead of seeking untiringly through the world, in cloisters and in evil places, in palaces and in taverns, for her who, whether she be princess or serving-maid, nun or courtesan, has been made for me and destined to me by God.

I AM the established lover of the lady in rose; it is almost a calling or a charge, and gives one stability in society. I

am no longer like a schoolboy seeking good luck among the grandmothers, and not venturing to utter a madrigal to a woman unless she is a centenarian. I perceive that since my installation people think more of me, that all the women speak to me with jealous coquetry, and put themselves very much about on my account. The men, on the contrary, are colder, and there is something of hostility and constraint in the few words that we exchange. They feel that they have in me a rival who is already formidable, and who may become more so.

"I have been told that many of them had criticised my manner of dress with bitterness, and said that it was too effeminate; that my hair was curled and glossed with over much care; that this, joined to my beardless face, gave me the most ridiculously foppish appearance; that for my garments I affected rich and splendid materials which had the odour of the theatre about them, and that I was more like an actor than a man—all the commonplaces in fact that people utter in order to give themselves the right of being dirty and of wearing sorry and badly-cut coats. But all this only serves to whitewash me, and all the ladies think that my hair is the handsomest in the world, and that my refinements in dress are in the best taste, and they seem very much inclined to indemnify me for the expense I have gone to on their account—for they are not so foolish as to believe that all this elegance is merely intended for my own personal adornment.

"I have told you summarily that I am the established lover of the lady in rose, but that is not enough for so exact a man as you. You will no doubt ask me what she is called. As to her name, I will not tell it to you; but if you like, to facilitate the narrative, and in memory of the colour of the dress in which I saw her for the first time, we will call her Rosette; it is a pretty name, and it was thus that my little puss was called.

"Nevertheless, do not imagine that I carried the fortress at the first assault. The Princess, though very humane towards her subjects, is not so lavish of her favours as one might think at first. She knows the value of them too well

not to make you buy them; and she further knows too well the eagerness given to desire by apt delay, and the flavour given to pleasure by a show of resistance, to surrender herself to you all at once, however strong the liking may be with which you have inspired her.

"To tell you the story in full I must go a little further back. I gave you a sufficiently circumstantial narrative of our first interview. I had one or two more in the same house, or perhaps three, and then she invited me to go and see her; I did not wait to be pressed, as you may well believe; I went at first with discretion, then somewhat oftener, then oftener still, and at last whenever I felt so inclined, and I must confess that that happened at least three or four times a day. The lady, after a few hours' absence, always received me as if I had just returned from the East Indies; I was very sensible of this, and it obliged me to show my gratitude in a manner marked with the greatest gallantry and tenderness in the world, to which she responded to the best of her ability.

"Rosette, since we have agreed to call her so, is a woman of great sense, and one who understands men admirably; and although she delayed the conclusion of the chapter for some time, I was never once out of temper with her. This is truly wonderful, for you know the fine passions I fall into when I have not at once what I desire, and when a woman exceeds the time that I have assigned her, in my head, for her surrender.

"I do not know how she managed it, but from the first interview she gave me to understand that she would be mine, and I was more sure of it than if I had had the promise written and signed with her own hand. It will be said, perhaps, that the boldness and ease of her manners left the ground clear for the rashness of hopes. I do not think that this can be the true reason: I have seen some women whose extraordinary freedom excluded in a measure the very shadow of a doubt, who have yet not produced this effect upon me, and with whom I have experienced timidity and disquietude when they were at the least out of place.

"What makes me much less amiable with the women whom I wish to overcome than with those about whom I am unconcerned, is the passionate waiting for the opportunity, and the uncertainty in which I am respecting the success of my undertaking: this makes me gloomy, and throws me into a delirium, which robs me of many of my talents and much of my presence of mind. When I see the hours which I had destined for a different employment escaping one by one, anger seizes me in spite of myself, and I cannot prevent myself from saying very sharp and bitter things, which are sometimes even brutal, and which throw things back a hundred leagues. With Rosette I felt nothing of all this; never, even when she was resisting me the most, had I the idea that she wished to escape my love. I allowed her quietly to display all her little coquetries, and I endured with patience the somewhat long delays which it pleased her to inflict on my ardour. Her severity had something smiling in it which consoled you as much as possible, and in her most Hyrcanian cruelties you had a glimpse of a background of humanity which hardly allowed you to have any serious fear.

"Virtuous women, even when they are least so, have a cross and disdainful appearance which to me is intolerable. They always look as if they were ready to ring the bell and have you kicked out of the house by their lackeys; and I really think that a man who takes the trouble to pay his addresses to a woman (which as it is, is not so agreeable as one would fain believe) does not deserve to be looked at in that way.

"Our dear Rosette has no such looks—and, I assure you, that it is to her advantage. She is the only woman with whom I have been myself, and I have the conceit to say that I have never been so good. My wit is freely displayed, and by the dexterity and the fire of her replies she has made me discover more than I credited myself with, and more, perhaps, than I really have. It is true that I have not been very logical; that is scarcely possible with her. It is not, however, that she has not her poetical side, in spite of what De C—— said about it; but she is so full of life, and force,

and movement, she seems so well off in the atmosphere in which she is, that one has no wish to leave it in order to ascend into the clouds. She fills real life so agreeably, and makes such an amusing thing of it for herself and others, that dreamland has nothing better to offer you.

"Rosette has the best disposition in the world, with men, be it understood, for with women she is as wicked as a devil. She is gay, lively, alert, ready for everything, very original in her way of speaking, and always with some charming and unexpected drolleries to say to you. She is a delicious companion, a pretty comrade whom one is fond of, rather than a mistress, and if I had a few years more and a few romantic ideas less, it would be all one to me, and I should even esteem myself the most fortunate mortal in existence. But—but—a particle which announces nothing good, and this little limiting devil of a word is unfortunately more used than any other in all human languages;—but I am a fool, an idiot, a veritable ninny who can be satisfied with nothing, and who is always conjuring up difficulties where none exist, and I am only half happy instead of being wholly so. Half is a good deal for this world of ours, and yet I do not find it enough.

"In the eyes of all the world I have a mistress whom many wish for and envy me, and whom no one would disdain. My desire is therefore apparently fulfilled, and I have no longer any right to pick quarrels with fate. Yet I do not seem to have a mistress; I understand by reasoning that such is the case, but I do not feel it to be so, and if someone were to ask me unexpectedly whether I had one, I believe I should answer 'No.' Nevertheless, the possession of a woman who has beauty and wit constitutes what at all times and in all lands has been and is called having a mistress, and I do not think that any other mode exists. This does not prevent me from having the strangest doubts on the subject, and it has gone so far that if several persons were to conspire to affirm to me that I am not Rosette's favoured lover, I should, in spite of the palpable evidence to the contrary, end by believing them.

"I see her the whole day, and even the whole night if I

wish. I give her all the caresses that I please when we are by ourselves both in town or in the country. Her complaisance is inexhaustible, and she enters thoroughly into all my caprices, however whimsical they may be. One evening I was seized with a fancy to fondle her roughly in the drawing-room, with the lustre and candles lighted, a fire on the hearth, the easy chairs arranged as if for a great evening reception, she dressed for a ball with her bouquet and fan, all her diamonds on her fingers and neck, plumes on her head, and in the most splendid costume possible, while I myself was dressed like a bear. She consented to my whim. When all was ready the servants were greatly surprised to receive an order not to allow anybody to come up; they did not seem to understand it in the least, and they went off with a dazed look which made us laugh greatly. Without doubt they thought that their mistress was distinctly mad, but what they did or did not think was of little moment to us.

"It was the drollest evening of my life. Imagine to yourself the appearance I must have presented with my plumed hat under my paw, rings on all my claws, a little sword with a silver guard, and a sky-blue ribbon at the hilt. I approached the fair one, and after making her a most graceful bow, seated myself by her side, and laid siege to her in all due form. The affected madrigals, the exaggerated gallantries which I addressed to her, all the jargon of the occasion was singularly set off by passing through my bear's muzzle, for I had a superb head of painted cardboard, which, however, I was soon obliged to throw under the table, so adorable was my deity that evening, and so greatly did I long to kiss her hand, and something better than her hand. The skin followed close on the head, for, not being accustomed to play the bear, I was greatly stifled in it and more so than was necessary.

"The ball costume had then a fine time of it, as you may believe; the plumes fell like snow around my beauty, her round white shoulders were scarcely confined by the sleeves, her bosom heaved above her corset, her feet emerged from her shoes. The necklaces became unstrung, and rolled on

the floor, and I think that never was more fresh a dress more piteously crushed and rumpled; the dress was of silver gauze, with a lining of white satin. Rosette displayed on this occasion a heroism which was quite beyond that of her sex, and which gave me the highest opinion of her. She looked on at the wreck of her toilet as though she were a disinterested spectator, and not for a single instant did she show the least regret for her dress and her laces; on the contrary, she was madly gay, and even assisted herself in the ill-treatment to which her finery was subjected by me at the height of my frenzy.

"Do you not think this fine enough to be recorded in history beside the most splendid deeds of the heroes of antiquity? The greatest proof of love that a woman can give her lover is not to say to him: 'Take care not to rumple me or stain me,' especially if her dress is new. A new dress is a stronger motive for a husband's security than is commonly believed. Rosette must worship me, or she possesses a philosophy superior to that of Epictetus.

"There are moments when I recognise none save God above me, and others, when I judge myself scarcely the equal of the wood-louse beneath its stone, or the mollusc on its sand-bank; but in whatever state of mind I may be, whether lofty or depressed, I have never been able to persuade myself that men were really my fellows. When people call me 'Sir,' or in speaking about me, say, 'this man,' it appears very singular to me. Even my name seems to me but an empty one, and not in reality mine, yet no matter in how low a tone it be pronounced amidst the loudest noise, I turn suddenly with a convulsive and feverish eagerness for which I have never been able to account to myself. Can it be the dread of finding in this man who knows my name, and to whom I am no longer one of the crowd, an antagonist or an enemy?

"It is especially when I have been living with a woman that I have most felt the invincible repugnance of my nature to any alliance or mixture. I am like a drop of oil in a glass of water. It is in vain that you turn and move the latter; the oil can never unite with it. It will

divide itself into a hundred thousand little globules which will reunite and mount again to the surface as soon as there is a moment's calm. The drop of oil and the glass of water —such is my history. Even voluptuousness, that diamond chain which binds all creatures together, that devouring fire which melts the rocks and metals of the soul, and makes them fall in tears, as material fire causes iron and granite to melt, has never, all powerful as it is, succeeded in taming and affecting me. Yet my senses are very keen, but my soul is to my body a hostile sister, and the hapless couple, like every possible couple, lawful or unlawful, live in a state of perpetual war. A woman's arms, the closest bonds on earth, so people say, are very feeble ties, so far as I am concerned, and I have never been further removed from my mistress than when she was pressing me to her heart. I was stifled, that was all.

"How many times have I been angered with myself! How many efforts have I made not to be as I am! How have I exhorted myself to be tender, amorous, impassioned! How often have I taken my soul by the hair, and dragged her to my lips in the midst of a beautiful kiss! Whatever I did she always retreated as soon as I released her. What torture for this poor soul to be exposed to these mad caprices of mine, and to sit everlastingly at banquets where she has nothing to eat!

"It was with Rosette that I resolved, once for all, to try whether I was not decidedly unsociable, and whether I could take sufficient interest in the existence of another to believe in it. I pushed my experiments to the point of exhaustion, and I did not become much clearer amid my doubts. With her, pleasure is so keen that often enough the soul is, if not moved, at least diverted, and this somewhat prejudices the exactness of my observations. But after all I came to see that it did not pass beyond the skin, and that I had only an epidermic enjoyment in which the soul took no part save from curiosity. I have pleasure, because I am young and ardent; but this pleasure comes to me from myself and not from another. The cause of it is in myself rather than in Rosette.

"My efforts are in vain, I cannot come out of myself. I am still what I was, something, that is to say, very wearied and very wearisome, and this displeases me greatly. I have not succeeded in getting into my brain the idea of another, into my soul the feeling of another, into my body the pain or joy of another. I am a prisoner within myself, and all invasion is impossible. The prisoner wishes to escape, the walls would most gladly fall in, and the gates open up to let him through, but some fatality or other invincibly keeps each stone in its place, and each bolt in its socket. It is as impossible for me to admit any one to see me as it is for me to go to see others, I can neither pay visits nor receive them, and I live in the most mournful isolation in the midst of the crowd. My bed perhaps is not widowed, but my heart is so always.

"I have done all that I could to convince myself that I possess her. I have tried to descend into her heart, but I have always stopped at the first step of the staircase, at her skin or on her mouth. In spite of the particular intimacy of our relations, I am very sensible that there is nothing in common between us. Never has an idea similar to mine spread its wings in that young and smiling head; never has that heart, full of life and fire, that heaves with its throbbing so firm and pure a breast, beaten in unison with my heart. My soul has never united with that soul. Cupid, the god with hawk's wings, has not kissed Psyche on her beautiful ivory brow. No! this woman does not belong to me.

"If you knew all that I have done to compel my soul to share in the love of my body, the frenzy with which I have plunged my mouth into hers, and steeped my arms in her hair, and how closely I have strained her round and supple form! Like the ancient Salmacis enamoured of the young Hermaphrodite, I strove to blend her frame with mine; I drank her breath and the tepid tears caused by voluptuousness to overflow from the brimming chalice of her eyes. The more she drew me towards her, and the closer our embraces, the less I loved her. My soul, seated mournfully, gazed with an air of pity on this lamentable mar-

riage to which she was not invited, or veiling her face in disgust, wept silently beneath the skirt of her cloak. All this comes perhaps from the fact that in reality I do not love Rosette, worthy as she is of being loved, and wishful as I am to love her.

"To get rid of the idea that I was myself, I devised very strange surroundings, in which it was altogether improbable that I would encounter myself, and not being able to cast my individuality to the dogs, I endeavoured to place it in such a different element that it would recognise itself no longer. I had but indifferent success, and this devil of a self pursues me obstinately; there are no means of getting rid of it. I cannot resort to telling it like other intruders that I am out, or that I have gone to the country.

"When my mistress has been in her bath, I have tried to play the Triton. The sea was a very large tub of marble. As to the Nereid, what was seen of her accused the water, all transparent as it was, of not being sufficiently so for the exquisite beauty of what it concealed. I have been with her, too, at night by the light of the moon in a gondola accompanied by music.

"This would be common enough at Venice, but it is not at all so here. In her carriage, flying along at full gallop, amid the noise of the wheels, with leaps and joltings, now lit up by the lamps, and now plunged into the most profound darkness, I have loaded her with caresses and found a pleasure therein which I advise you taste. But I was forgetting that you are a venerable patriarch, and that you do not go in for such refinements. I have come into her house through the window with the key of the door in my pocket. I have made her come to me at noon-day; and, in short, I have compromised her in such a fashion that nobody now (myself, of course, excepted) has any doubt that she is my mistress.

"By reason of all these devices which, if I were not so young, would look like the expedients of a worn-out libertine, Rosette worships me chiefly and above all others. She sees in them the eagerness of a petulant love which nothing can restrain, and which is the same notwithstanding the di-

versity of times and places. She sees in them the constantly reviving effect of her charms, and the triumph of her beauty; truly, I wish that she were right, and to be just, it is neither my fault nor hers that she is not.

"The only respect in which I wrong her is that I am myself. If I were to tell her this, the child would very quickly reply that it is just my greatest merit in her eyes; which would be more kind than sensible.

"Once—it was at the beginning of our union—I believed that I had attained my end, for one minute I believed that I had loved—I did love. Oh! my friend, I have never lived save during that minute, and had that minute been an hour I should have become a god. We had both gone out on horseback, I on my dear Ferragus, she on a mare as white as snow, and with the look of a unicorn, so slim were its legs and so slender its neck. We were following a large avenue of elms of prodigious height; the sun was descending upon us lukewarm and golden, sifted through the slashings in the foliage; lozenges of ultramarine sparkled here and there through the dappled clouds, great lines of pale blue strewd the edge of the horizon, changing into an apple-green of exquisite tenderness when they met with the orange-coloured tints of the west. The aspect of the heavens was charming and strange; the breeze brought to us an odour of wild flowers that was ravishing in the extreme. From time to time a bird rose before us, and crossed the avenue singing.

"The bell of a village that was not visible was gently ringing the *Angelus*, and the silver sounds, which reached us weakened by the distance, were infinitely sweet. Our animals were at a walk, and were going so equally side by side, that one was not in advance of the other. My heart expanded, and my soul overflowed my body. I had never been so happy. I said nothing, nor did Rosette, and yet we had never understood each other so well. We were so close together that my leg was touching the body of Rosette's horse. I leaned over to her and passed my arm about her waist; she made the same movement on her side, and laid back her head upon my shoulder. Our lips clung together;

oh! what a chaste and delicious kiss! Our horses were still walking with their bridles floating on their necks. I felt Rosette's arm relax, and her loins yield more and more. For myself I was growing weak, and was ready to swoon. Ah! I can assure you that at that moment I thought little of whether I was myself or another. We went thus as far as the end of the avenue, when the noise of feet made us abruptly resume our positions; it was some people of our acquaintance, also on horseback, who came up and spoke to us. If I had had pistols, I believe that I should have fired upon them.

"I looked at them with a gloomy and furious air, which must have appeared very singular to them. After all, I was wrong to become so angry with them, for they had, without intending it, done me the service of interrupting my pleasure at the very moment when, by reason of its own intensity, it was on the point of becoming a pain, or of sinking beneath its own violence. The science of stopping in time is not regarded with all the respect which is its due. Sometimes when toying with a woman you pass your arm around her waist; it is at first most voluptuous to feel the gentle warmth of her frame, to come almost in contact with her soft and velvety flesh, the polished ivory of her skin, and to watch the heaving of her swelling and quivering breast. The fair one falls asleep in this amorous and charming position; the curve of her body becomes less pronounced, her breast becomes calm; her sides heave with the larger and more regular respiration of sleep; her muscles relax, her head rolls over in her hair.

"Your arm, however, is pressed more than before, and you begin to perceive that it is a woman and not a sylphid; yet you would not take away your arm for anything in the world, and for this there are many reasons. First, it is rather dangerous to awake a woman who has fallen asleep beside you; you must be prepared to substitute for the delicious dream that she has been having a reality more delicious still. Secondly, by asking her to raise herself that you may withdraw your arm, you tell her indirectly that she is heavy and in your way, which is not polite, or per-

haps you give her to understand that you are weak or fatigued—a most humiliating thing for you, and one which will prejudice you infinitely in her mind. Thirdly, you believe that as you have experienced pleasure in this position, you may do so again by maintaining it, and in this you are mistaken. The poor arm finds itself caught beneath the mass that oppresses it, the blood stops, the nerves twitch, and the numbness pricks you with its millions of needles. You are a sort of little Milo of Crotona, and the surface of your couch and the back of your divinity represent with sufficient exactness the two parts of the tree which are joined together again. Day comes at last to release you from this martyrdom, and you leap down from this rack with more eagerness than any husband displays in descending from the nuptial stage.

"Such is the history of many passions.

"It is that of all pleasures.

"Be that as it may, in spite of the interruption, or by reason of it, never did such voluptuousness pass over my head; I really felt myself to be another. The soul of Rosette had entered in its integrity into my body. My soul had left me, and filled her heart as her own soul filled mine. No doubt they had met on the way in that long equestrian kiss, as Rosette afterwards called it (which by the way annoyed me), and had crossed each other, and mingled together as intimately as is possible for the souls of two mortal creatures on a grain of perishable mud.

"The angels must surely embrace one another thus, and the true paradise is not in the sky, but on the lips of one we love.

"I have waited in vain for a similar moment, and I have tried, but without success, to provoke its return. We have very often gone to ride in the avenue of the wood during beautiful sunsets; the trees had the same verdure, the birds were singing the same song, but the sun looked dull to us, and the foliage yellowed; the singing of the birds seemed harsh and discordant, for there was no longer harmony within ourselves. We have brought our horses to a walk, and we have tried the same kiss. Alas! our lips only were

united, and it was but the spectre of the old kiss. The beautiful, the sublime, the divine, the only true kiss that I have ever given and received in my life had disappeared for ever. Since that day I have always returned from the wood with a depth of inexpressible sadness. Rosette, gay and playful as she usually is, cannot escape from the impression of this, and her reverie is betrayed by a little, delicately wrinkled pout, which at the least is worth her smile.

"There is scarcely anything but the fumes of wine, and the brilliancy of wax-candles that can recall me from these melancholy thoughts. We both drink like persons condemned to death, silently and continually, until we have reached the necessary dose; then we begin to laugh and to make fun most heartily of what we call our sentimentality.

"We laugh—because we cannot weep. Ah! who will cause a tear to spring in the depths of my exhausted eye?

"What is lacking in Rosette that she is not that woman? She lacks my belief in her. What fatality is it that causes me ever to have for my mistress a woman whom I do not love. Her neck is smooth enough to hang on it necklaces of the finest workmanship; her fingers are tapering enough to do honour to the finest and richest rings; rubies would blush with pleasure to sparkle at the rosy extremity of her delicate ear; her waist might gird on the cestus of Venus; but it is love alone who can knot his mother's scarf.

"All the merit that Rosette possesses is in herself, I have lent her nothing. I have not cast over her beauty that veil of perfection with which love envelops the loved one; the veil of Isis is transparent beside such a one as that. Nothing but satiety can raise a corner of it.

"I do not love Rosette; at least the love, if any, which I have for her has no resemblance to the idea that I have formed of love. Still my idea is perhaps not correct. I do not venture to give any decision. However, she renders me quite insensible to the merit of other women, and I have never wished for anybody with any consistency since possessing her. If she has cause to be jealous of any, it is only of phantoms, and they do not disquiet her much. Yet my imagination is her most formidable rival; it is a thing which,

with all her acuteness, she will probably never find out.

"If women knew this! Of what infidelities is not the least volatile lover guilty towards his most worshipped mistress! It is to be presumed that the women pay us back with interest; but they do as we do, and say nothing about it. A mistress is an obligato, which usually disappears beneath its graces and flourishes. Very often the kisses she receives are not for her; it is the idea of another woman that is embraced in her person, and she often profits (if such can be called a profit) by the desires which are inspired by another. Ah! how many times, poor Rosette, have you served to embody my dreams, and given a reality to your rivals! How many the infidelities in which you have been the involuntary accomplice! If you could have thought at those moments when my arms clasped you with so much intensity, when my lips were united most closely to yours, that your beauty and your love counted for nothing, and that the thought of you was a thousand leagues away from me! If you had been told that those eyes, veiled with amorous languor, were cast down only that they might not see you and so dissipate the illusion that you merely served to complete, and that instead of being a mistress you were but an instrument of voluptuousness, a means of deceiving, a desire impossible of realisation!

"O celestial creatures, beautiful virgins, frail and diaphanous, who bend your pervinca eyes and clasp your lily hands on the golden background of the pictures of the old German masters, window saints, missal-martyrs who smile so sweetly amid the scrolls of arabesques, and emerge so fair and fresh from the bells of flowers! O beautiful courtesans lying veiled by your hair only, on beds strewn with roses, beneath broad purple curtains with your bracelets and necklaces of huge pearls, your fan and your mirrors where the west hangs in the shadow a flaming spangle! brown daughters of Titian, who display so voluptuously to us your undulating hips, your firm and compact limbs, your smooth bodies, and your supple and muscular frames! ancient goddesses, who rear your white phantom in the shadows of the garden!—you form a part of my seraglio; I have possessed you all in

turn. Saint Ursula, on Rosette's beautiful hands I have kissed thine; I have played with the black hair of the Muranese, and never had Rosette more trouble in dressing her hair again; maidenly Diana, I have been with thee more than Actæon, and I have not been changed into a stag: I have replaced thy beautiful Endymion! How many rivals who are unsuspected, and on whom no vengeance can be taken! Yet they are not always painted or sculptured!

"Women, when you see your lover become more tender than is his wont, and strain you in his arms with extraordinary emotion; when he sinks his head into your lap, and raises it again with humid and wandering eyes; when enjoyment only augments his desire, and he stifles your voice with kisses, as though he feared to hear it, be certain that he does not know even whether you are there; that he is keeping tryst at this moment with a chimera which you render palpable, and whose part you play. Many chamber-maids have profited by the love inspired by queens. Many women have profited by the love inspired by goddesses, and a vulgar enough reality has often served as a socle for an ideal idol. That is the reason why poets usually take trollops for their mistresses. A man might live ten years with a woman without having ever seen her; such is the history of many great geniuses whose ignoble or obscene connexions have astonished the world.

"I have been guilty only of infidelities of this description towards Rosette. I have betrayed her only for pictures and statues, and she has shared equally in the betrayal. I have not the smallest material trespass on my conscience to reproach myself with. I am in this respect as white as the snow on the Jungfrau, and yet, without being in love with any one, I would wish to be so with some one. I do not seek an opportunity, and I should not be sorry were it to come; if it came I should perhaps not avail myself of it, for I have an intimate conviction that it would be the same with another, and I had rather it were thus with Rosette than with any other; for, putting the woman on one side, there remains to me at least a pretty companion, full of wit, and very agreeably demoralised; and this consideration is not

one of the least that restrain me, for, in losing the mistress, I should be grieved to lose the friend."

"Do you know that for nearly five months—yes, for quite five months—for five eternities, I have been Madame Rosette's established Celadon? It is perfectly splendid. I should never have believed that I was so constant, nor, I will wager, would she have believed it either. We are, in truth, a couple of plucked pigeons, for only turtle doves could display such tenderness. What billing! What cooing! What ivy-like entwinings. What a twofold existence! Nothing in the world could have been more touching, and our two poor little hearts might have been put on one cartel, pierced by the same spit, with a gusty flame.

"Five months *tête-à-tête*, so to speak, for we have been seeing each other every day and nearly every night—the door always closed to everybody; is it not enough to make one shudder to think of it! Well, to the glory of the peerless Rosette, it must be said that I have not been overmuch wearied, and that this period will no doubt prove to have been the most agreeable in my life. I do not believe that it would be possible to occupy a man devoid of passion in a more sustained and amusing manner, and God knows what a terrible idleness is that which proceeds from an empty heart! It would be impossible to form any idea of this woman's resources. She commenced by drawing them from her intellect, and then from her heart, for she loves me to adoration. With what art does she profit by the smallest spark and how well she knows how to convert it into a conflageration! How skilfully she directs the faintest movements of the soul! How well can she turn langour into tender dreaming! And by how many indirect paths can she guide the mind that is wandering from her back

to herself again! It is wonderful. And I admire her as one of the loftiest geniuses that can exist.

"In gratitude for all those hours to which she has given wings, in gratitude for the love which, for my pleasure, she has bestowed on me, I wish it. I shall deceive her, but is not an agreeable deception better than a distressing truth? for I shall never have the heart to tell her that I do not love her. The vain shadow of love on which she feasts appears so adorable to her, she embraces the pale spectre with such intoxication and effusion that I dare not cause it to vanish; yet I am afraid that in the end she will perceive that, after all, it is but a phantom. This morning we had a conversation, which I am going to relate in dramatic form for the sake of greater fidelity, and which makes me fear that we cannot prolong our union very long.

"The scene represents Rosette's room. A ray of sun is shining through the curtains; it is ten o'clock. Rosette has one arm beneath my neck, and does not move for fear of waking me. From time to time she raises herself a little on her elbow, and, holding her breath, bends her face over mine. I see all this through the grating of my eyelashes, for I have been awake for an hour past. Rosette's chemise has a neck-trimming of Mechlin lace which is all torn, and her hair is escaping in confusion from her little cap. She is as pretty as a woman can be when you do not love her, although she is by your side.

"ROSETTE (seeing that I am not longer asleep)—'O the nasty sleeper!'

"MYSELF (yawning)—'A—a—ah!'

"ROSETTE—'Do not yawn like that, or I will not kiss you for a week.'

"MYSELF—'Oh!'

"ROSETTE—'It seems, sir, that you do not think it very important that I should kiss you?'

"MYSELF—'Yes, I do.'

"ROSETTE—'How carelessly you say that! Very well; you may expect that for the next week I shall not touch you with the tip of my lips. To-day is Tuesday—so till next Tuesday.'

"MYSELF. 'Pshaw!'

"ROSETTE—'How, pshaw!'

"MYSELF—'Yes, pshaw! You will kiss me before this evening, or I die.'

"ROSETTE—'You will die! What a coxcomb! I have spoiled you, sir.'

"MYSELF—'I will live. I am not a coxcomb, and you have not spoiled me—quite the contrary. First of all, I request the suppression of the *Sir;* you are well enough acquainted with me to call me by my name, and to say *thou* to me.'

"ROSETTE—'I have spoiled thee, D'Albert.'

"MYSELF—'Good. Now bring your lips near.'

"ROSETTE—'No, next Tuesday.'

"MYSELF—'Nonsense. Are we not to pet each other for the future except with a calendar in our hands? We are both a little too young for that. Now, your lips, my infanta, or I shall get a crick in my neck.'

"ROSETTE—'No.'

"MYSELF—'Ah! you wish to be ravished, my pet; by heavens! you shall be. The thing is feasible, though perhaps it has not been done yet.'

"ROSETTE—'Impertinent man!'

"MYSELF—'Observe, most fair one, that I have paid you the compliment of a *perhaps;* it is very polite on my part. But we are wandering from the subject. Bend your head. Come: what is this, my favourite sultana? and what a cross face. We wish to kiss a smile and not a pout.'

"ROSETTE (stooping down to kiss me)—'How would you have me laugh? You say such harsh things to me!'

"MYSELF—'My intention is to say very tender ones.—Why do you think that I say harsh things to you?'

"ROSETTE—'I don't know—but you do.'

"MYSELF—'You take jokes of no consequence for harshness.'

"ROSETTE—'Of no consequence! You call that of no consequence? Everything is of consequence in love. Listen, I would rather have you beat me than laugh as you are doing.'

"MYSELF—'You would like to see me weep, then?'

"ROSETTE—'You always go from one extreme to the other. You are not asked to weep, but to speak reasonably, and to give up this quizzing manner, which suits you very badly.'

"MYSELF—'It is impossible for me to speak reasonably and not to quiz; so I am going to beat you, since it is to your liking.'

"ROSETTE—'Do.'

"MYSELF (giving her a few little slaps on her shoulders)—'I would rather cut off my own head than spoil your ador able little body, and marble the whiteness of this charming back with blue. My goddess, whatever pleasure a woman may have in being beaten, you shall certainly not have it.'

"ROSETTE—'You love me no longer.'

"MYSELF—'That does not follow very directly from what precedes; it is about as logical as to say: It is raining, so do not give me my umbrella; or: It is cold, open the window.'

"ROSETTE—'You do not love me, you have never loved me.'

"MYSELF—'Ah! the matter is becoming complicated: you love me no longer, and you have never loved me. This is tolerably contradictory: how can I leave off doing a thing which I have never begun? You see, little queen, that you do not know what you are saying, and that you are perfectly absurd.'

"ROSETTE—'I wished so much to be loved by you that I assisted in deluding myself. People easily believe what they desire; but now I can quite see that I am deceived. You were deceived yourself; you took a liking for love, and desire for passion. The thing happens every day. I bear you no ill-will for it: it did not depend upon yourself to be in love; I must lay the blame on my own lack of charms. I should have been more beautiful, more playful, more coquettish; I should have tried to mount up to you, O my poet! instead of wishing you to come down to me: I was afraid of losing you in the clouds, and I dreaded lest your head should steal away your heart from me. I imprisoned

you in my love, and I believed when giving up myself wholly to you that you would keep something——'

"MYSELF—'Rosette, move back a little; you are like a hot coal.'

"ROSETTE—'If I am in your way, I will get up. Ah! heart of rock, drops of water pierce the stone, and my tears cannot penetrate you.' (She weeps.)

"MYSELF—'If you weep like that, you will certainly turn our bed into a bath. A bath? I should say into an ocean. Can you swim, Rosette?'

"ROSETTE—'Villain!'

"MYSELF—'Well! all at once I am a villain! You flatter me, Rosette, I have not the honour: I am a gentle citizen, alas; and have never committed the smallest crime; I have done a foolish thing, perhaps, which was to love you to distraction: that is all. Would you absolutely make me repent of it? I have loved you, and I love you as much as I can. Since I have been your lover, I have always walked in your shadow: I have given up all my time to you, my days and my nights. I have not used lofty phrases with you, because I do not like them except in writing; but I have given you a thousand proofs of my fondness. I will say nothing to you of the most scrupulous fidelity, for that is of course; I have become seven quarters of a pound thinner since you have been my adoration. What more would you have? Here I am by your side; do people behave in this way with those whom they do not love? I do everything that you wish. You say "Go," and I go; "Stay," and I stay. I am the most admirable lover in the world, it seems to me.'

"ROSETTE—'That is just what I complain about—the most perfect lover in the world, in fact.'

"MYSELF—'What have you to reproach me with?'

"ROSETTE—'Nothing, and I would rather have some cause of complaint against you.'

"MYSELF—'This is a strange quarrel.'

"ROSETTE—'It is much worse. You do not love me. I cannot help it nor can you. What would you have done in such a case? Unquestionably I should prefer to have some fault to pardon in you. I would scold you; you

would excuse yourself well or ill, and we should make it up.'

"MYSELF—'It would be all to your advantage. The greater the crime the more splendid would the reparation be.'

"ROSETTE—'You are quite aware, sir, that I am not yet reduced to employ that expedient, and that if I pleased presently, although you do not love me, and we are quarrelling——'

"MYSELF—'Yes, I acknowledge it as purely an effect of your clemency. Do please a little; it would be better than syllogising at random as we are doing.'

'ROSETTE—'You wish to cut short a conversation which is inconvenient to you; but, if you please, my fine friend, we shall content ourselves with speaking!'

"MYSELF—'It is an entertainment that does not cost much. I assure you that you are wrong; for you are wonderfully pretty, and I feel towards you——'

"ROSETTE—'What you will express to me another time.'

"MYSELF—'Oh come, adorable one, are you a little Hyrcanian tigress? You are incomparably cruel to-day! Are you eager to become a vestal? It would be an original caprice.'

"ROSETTE—'Why not? There have been stranger ones than that; but I shall certainly be a vestal for you. Learn, sir, that I am partial only to people who love me, or by whom I believe myself loved. You do not come under either of those two denominations. Allow me to rise!'

"MYSELF—'If you get up, I shall get up as well. You will have the trouble of getting into bed again: that is all.'

"ROSETTE—'Let me alone!'

"MYSELF—'By heavens, no!'

"ROSETTE (struggling)—'Oh! you will let me go!'

"MYSELF—'I venture, madame, to assure you of the contrary.'

"ROSETTE (seeing that she is not the stronger)—'Well! I will stay; you are squeezing my arm with such force!—What do you want with me?'

"MYSELF—'To remain where you are. I think you might have divined this much without asking any such superfluous question.

"ROSETTE (already finding it impossible to defend herself)—'On condition that you will love me a great deal—I surrender.'

"MYSELF—'It is rather late to capitulate when the enemy is already in the fortress.'

"ROSETTE (throwing her arms round my neck)—'Then I surrender unconditionally—I trust to your generosity.'

"MYSELF—'You do well.'

"Here, my dear friend, I think it would not be amiss to put a line of asterisks, for the rest of the dialogue could scarcely be translated except by onomatopœia.

* * * * * *

"Rosette, who is still in love, does what she can to obviate these inconveniences. Unfortunately, there are two things in the world which cannot be commanded—love and weariness. On my part, I make superhuman efforts to overcome the somnolence which overtakes me in spite of myself, and, like country people who fall asleep at ten o'clock in town drawing-rooms, I keep my eyes as wide open as possible, and lift up my eyelids with my fingers! It is of no use, and I assume a conjugal freedom from restraint which is most unpleasing.

"The dear child, who the other day found herself the better for the rural system, brought me yesterday into the country.

"It might be to the purpose, perhaps, to give you a little description of the said country, which is rather pretty; it might enliven our metaphysics somewhat, and, besides, the characters must have a background; the figures cannot stand out against a blank, or against that vague brown tint with which painters fill the field of their canvas.

"The approaches to it are very picturesque. You arrive, by a highway bordered with old trees, at a star, the middle of which is marked by a stone obelisk surmounted by a ball of gilt copper. Five roads form the rays; then the ground becomes suddenly hollow. The road dips into a rather nar-

row valley, crosses the little stream, that occupies the bottom, by a one-arched bridge, and then with great strides reascends the opposite side, where stands the little village, the slated steeple of which can be seen peeping from among the thatched roofs and round-headed apple-trees. The horizon is not very vast, for it is bounded on both sides by the crest of the hill, but it is cheerful and rests the eye. Besides the bridge there is a mill, and a structure of red stones in the shape of a tower; the nearly perpetual barking, and the sight of some brachs and young bandy-legged turnspits warming themselves in the sun before the door, would tell you that it is there that the gamekeeper dwells, if the buzzards and martins nailed to the shutters could leave you in doubt about it for a moment.

"At this spot there begins an avenue of sorbs, the scarlet fruit of which attracts clouds of birds. As people do not pass there very often, there is only a white band along the middle; all the rest is covered over with a short fine moss, and in the double rut traced by the wheels of vehicles, little frogs, green as chrysoprase, croak and hop. After proceeding for some time you find yourself before a gilded and painted iron grating, its sides adorned with spiked fences and *chevaux-de-frise*. Then the road turns towards the mansion—which, being buried in the verdure like a bird's nest, cannot as yet be seen—without hastening too much, however, and not infrequently turning aside to visit an elegant kiosk or a fine prospect, crossing and recrossing the stream by Chinese or rustic bridges.

"Owing to the unevenness of the ground, and the dams erected for the service of the mill, the stream has, in several places, a fall of from four to five feet, and nothing can be more pleasant than to hear all these cascades prattling close at hand, most frequently without seeing them, for the osiers and elders which line the bank form an almost impenetrable curtain. But all this portion of the park is in a measure only the ante-chamber of the other part. A high road passing across this property unfortunately cuts it in two, an inconvenience which has been remedied in a very

ingenious manner. Two great embattled walls full of barbicans and loopholes, in imitation of a ruined fortress, stand on either side of the road; a tower on which hangs gigantic ivy, and which flanks the mansion, lets fall on the opposite bastion a veritable drawbridge with iron chains, which are lowered every morning.

"You pass through a pointed archway into the interior of the donjon, and thence into the second enclosure, where the trees, which have not been cut for more than a century, are of extraordinary height, with knotty trunks swaddled in parasitical plants, and are the finest and most singular that I have ever seen. Some have no leaves except at the top, where they terminate in broad parasols; others taper into plumes. Others, on the contrary, have near the body a large tuft, out of which the stripped stem shoots up to heaven like a second tree planted in the first; you would think that they formed the foreground of an artificial landscape, or the side-scenes of a theatrical decoration, so curiously deformed are they; while ivy passing from one to the other and suffocating them in its embrace, mingles its dark hearts with the green leaves and looks like their shadows. Nothing in the world could be more picturesque. The stream widens at this spot so as to form a little lake, and its shallowness allows the beautiful aquatic plants, which carpet its bed, to be seen beneath the transparent water. These are nymphaceæ and lotuses floating carelessly in the purest crystal, with the reflections of the clouds and of the weeping-willows that lean over on the bank. The mansion is on the other side, and this little skiff, painted apple-green and light red, will save you going rather a long round to reach the bridge.

"It is a collection of buildings, constructed at different epochs, with uneven gables, and a crowd of little bell-turrets This pavilion is of brick, with corners of stone; this main building is of a rustic order, full of embossments and vermiculations. This other pavilion is quite modern; it has a flat roof, after the Italian fashion, with vases and a balustrade of tiles, and a vestibule of ticking in the shape of a tent. The windows are all of different sizes, and do

not correspond; they are of all kinds. We find even trefoils and ogives, for the chapel is Gothic. Certain portions are latticed, like Chinese houses, with trellis-work planted in different colours, whereon climb woodbines, jessamines, nasturtiums, and virginian creepers, the long sprays of which enter the rooms familiarly, and seem to stretch out a hand to you and bid you good morning.

"In spite of this want of regularity, or rather by reason of it, the appearance of the building is charming. It has at least not all been seen at once, you can make a choice, and you are always bethinking yourself of something that had not been noticed. This dwelling, which I did not know of, as it is at a distance of twenty leagues, pleased me at the very first, and I was most grateful to Rosette for having had the triumphant idea of choosing such a nest for our loves.

"We arrived there at the close of day; and being fatigued, had nothing more urgent, after supping with great appetite, than to go to bed—separately, be it understood—for we intended to sleep seriously.

"I was dreaming some rose-coloured dream, full of flowers, perfumes, and birds, when I felt a warm breath on my forehead, and a kiss descending upon it with throbbing wings. A delicate noise of lips, and a soft moisture on the place that was touched, made me think that I was not dreaming. I opened my eyes, and the first thing that I saw was the fresh white neck of Rosette, who was bending down over the bed to kiss me. I threw my arms around her form, and returned her kiss more amorously than I had done for a long time.

"She went away to draw the curtain and open the window, then came back and sat down on the edge of my bed, holding my hand between both of hers and playing with my rings. Her attire was most coquettishly simple. She was without corset or petticoat, and had absolutely nothing on her but a large dressing-gown of cambric, as white as milk, very ample and with broad folds; her hair was drawn up on the top of her head with a little white rose, of the kind that has only three or four leaves; her ivory feet played in slippers worked in brilliant and variegated colours,

as delicate as possible, though still too large, and with no quarter like those of the young Roman ladies. As I looked at her I regretted that I was her lover, and had not to become so.

"The dream that I had at the moment when she came to awake me in so agreeable a manner was not very remote from the reality. My room looked upon the little lake that I have just described. My window was framed with jessamine, which was shaking its stars in silver rain upon the floor. Large foreign flowers were posing their urns beneath my balcony as though to cense me; a sweet and undecided odour, formed of a thousand different perfumes, penetrated to my bed, whence I could see the water gleaming and scaling into millions of spangles; the birds were jargoning, warbling, chirping, and piping. It was a harmonious noise, and confused like the hum of a festival. Opposite, on a sunlit hill, stretched a lawn of golden green, on which some large oxen, scattered here and there, were feeding under the care of a little boy. Quite alone, and further away, might be seen immense squares of forest of a darker green, from which the bluish smoke of the charcoal kilns curled spirally upwards.

"Do what we may, happiness is pink and white; it can scarcely be represented otherwise. Delicate colours suit it as a matter of course. On its palette it has only water-green, sky-blue, and straw-yellow. Its pictures are all bright like those of the Chinese painters. Flowers, light, perfumes, a soft and silken skin which touches yours, a veiled harmony coming you know not whence, with these there is perfect happiness, and there is no means of living happy in a different way. For myself, I, who have a horror of the common-place, who dream but of strange adventures, strong passions, delirious ecstasies, and odd and difficult situations, I must be foolishly happy in the manner I have indicated, and, for all my efforts, I have never been able to discover any other method of being so.

"I will not describe to you the life that we are leading here; it may easily be imagined. There are walks in the great woods, violets and strawberries, kisses and little blue

flowers, luncheons on the grass, readings and books forgotten beneath the trees; parties on the water with the end of a scarf or a white hand dipping in the current, long songs and long laughter repeated by the echo on the bank; the most Arcadian life that could be imagined!

"Rosette overwhelms me with caresses and attentions; cooing more than a dove in the month of May, she rolls herself about me and encircles me in her folds; she strives that I may have no other atmosphere than her breath, and no other horizon than her eyes; she invests me very carefully, and suffers nothing whatever to enter or come forth without permission; she has built a little guard-house beside my heart, whence she keeps watch over it night and day. She says charming things to me; she makes me the kindest madrigals; she sits at my feet and behaves before me quite like a humble slave before her lord and master—behaviour which suits me well enough, for I like these little submissive ways, and I have an inclination towards oriental despotism. She never does the smallest thing without taking my advice, and she seems completely to have renounced whim and wish; she tries to divine my thought and to anticipate it; she is wearisome with wit, tenderness, and kindness; she is perfect enough to be thrown out of the window. How the devil can I give up so adorable a woman without seeming a monster? It would be enough to discredit my heart for ever.

"Oh! how I long to find her in fault, and to discover something wrong against her! how impatiently I wait for an opportunity for a quarrel! but there is no danger that the rogue will furnish me with one! When I speak abruptly, and in a harsh tone to her, in order to bring about an altercation, she gives me such soft answers, in such silvery tones, with such moist eyes, and with such a sad and loving mien that I seem to myself something worse than a tiger, or else a crocodile at the very least, and, in spite of my rage, am obliged to ask her pardon.

"She literally murders me with love; she puts me to the torture, and every day brings the planks, between which I am caught, a notch closer. She probably wants to drive me

into telling her that I detest her, that she wearies me to death, and that, if she does not leave me at peace, I will cut her face with a horsewhip. By heavens! she will succeed, and, if she continues to be so amiable, the devil take me but it will be before long.

"In spite of all these fair appearances, Rosette has had enough of me as I of her; but as she has committed glaring follies on my account, she will not, by a rupture, put herself in the wrong in the eyes of the worthy corporation of womankind. Every great passion pretends to be eternal, and it is very convenient to avail one's-self of its advantages without being subjected to its drawbacks. Rosette reasons in this manner: 'Here is a young man who has only a remnant of liking for me, and being artless and gentle, he does not dare to show it openly, and is at his wit's end; it is clear that I weary him, but he will die with the trouble of it rather than take it upon himself to leave me. As he is a sort of poet, he has his head full of fine phrases about love and passion, and believes himself obliged, as a matter of conscience, to play the part of a Tristan or an Amadis. Hence, as nothing in the world is more intolerable than the caresses of one whom you are beginning to love no longer (and to love a woman no longer means to hate her violently), I am going to lavish them on him sufficiently to give him a fit of indigestion, and he will be obliged at any rate to send me to all the devils, or else begin to love me again as he did the first day, which he will carefully abstain from doing.'

"Nothing could be better conceived. Is it not charming to act the deserted Ariadne? People pity you and admire you, and cannot find sufficient imprecation for the wretch who has been monstrous enough to forsake so adorable a creature. You assume a resigned and mournful air, you rest your chin on your hand and your elbow on your knee in such a way as to bring out the pretty blue veins of your wrist. You wear more streaming hair, and for some time adopt dresses of a darker hue. You avoid uttering the name of the ungrateful one, but you make indirect allusions to it, heaving little admirably modulated sighs.

"A woman so good, so beautiful, so impassioned, who has made such great sacrifices, who is absolutely free from reproach, a chosen vessel, a pearl of love, a spotless mirror, a drop of milk, a white rose, an ideal essence for the perfume of a life—a woman who should have been worshipped on bended knees, and who, after her death, ought to be cut in small pieces for the purpose of relics—to abandon her iniquitously, fraudulently, villainously! Why, a corsair would not do worse! To give her her death-blow!—for she will assuredly die of it! A man must have a paving-stone in his body instead of a heart to behave in such a way.

"O men! men!

"I say this to myself; but perhaps it is not true.

"Excellent hypocrites as women naturally are, I can scarcely believe that they could go so far as this; are not Rosette's demonstrations after all only the accurate expression of her feelings towards me? However this may be, the continuation of the *tête-à-tête* is no longer possible, and the fair chatelaine has at last just sent off invitations to her acquaintances in the neighbourhood. We are busy making preparation to receive these worthy country people. Good-bye, dear friend."

"I was wrong. My wicked heart, being incapable of love, had given itself this reason that it might deliver itself from a weight of gratitude which it could not support. I had joyfully seized this idea in order to excuse myself in my own eyes. I had clung to it, but nothing in the world could have been more untrue. Rosette was not playing a part, and if ever a woman was true, it is she. Well! I almost bear her ill-will for the sincerity of her passion, which is one tie the more, and makes a rupture more difficult and less excusable; I would rather have her false and fickle. What a

singular position is this! You wish to go away and you remain; you wish to say, 'I hate you,' and you say, 'I love you;' your past impels you onward and prevents you from returning or stopping. You are faithful, and you regret it. An indefinable kind of shame prevents you from giving yourself up entirely to other acquaintances, and makes you compound with yourself. You give to one all that you can take from the other without sacrificing appearances; times and opportunities for seeing each other, which once presented themselves so naturally, are now to be discovered only with difficulty. You begin to remember that you have business of importance.

"My old notions, which had slumbered for a little while, awake more foolish than ever. I am tormented as before with the desire of having a mistress, and as before, in Rosette's very arms, I doubt whether I have ever had one. I see again the fair lady at her window in her park of the time of Louis XIII, and the huntress on her white horse gallops across the avenue in the forest. My ideal beauty smiles at me from the height of her hammock of clouds, I imagine that if I were to post off on the spot and go somewhere, far away and quickly, I should reach a spot where things that concern me are taking place and where my destinies are being decided.

"I have suffered my wings to be caught in this treacherous bird-lime, hoping that I should leave only a feather behind, and believing myself able to fly away when I should think fit to do so. Nothing could be more difficult; I find that I am covered with an imperceptible net more difficult to break than that forged by Vulcan, and the texture of the meshes is so fine and close that there is no aperture admitting of escape. The net, moreover, is large, and it is possible to move about inside it with an appearance of freedom; it can scarcely be perceived, save when an attempt is made to break it, but then it resists and becomes as solid as a wall of brass.

"How much time have I lost, O my ideal! without making the slightest effort to realise thee! How have I slothfully abandoned myself to the voluptuousness of a night! and how

little do I deserve to find thee!

"Sometimes I think of forming another connection; but I have no one in view. More frequently I propose, if I succeed in breaking these bonds, never to enter into similar ones again; and yet there is nothing to justify such a resolution, for this affair has been apparently a very happy one, and I have not the least complaint to make against Rosette. She has always been good to me; her conduct could not have been better. Her fidelity to me has been exemplary; she has not occasioned the slightest suspicion. The most vigilant and restless jealousy would have found nothing to say against her, and would have been obliged to fall asleep. A man could have been jealous only for things that were past; although it is true that in that case he would have had abundant reason to be so. But jealousy of this description is a nicety which happily is rather rare; the present is quite enough without going back to search beneath the rubbish of old passion for phials of poison and cups of gall.

"What woman could you love if you thought of all this? You know, in a confused way, that a woman has had several lovers before you; but you say to yourself—so full of tortuous turnings and windings is the pride of man!—that you are the first that she has truly loved, and that it was owing to a concurrence of fatal circumstances that she found herself united to people unworthy of her, or perhaps that it was the vague longing of a heart which was seeking for its own satisfaction, and which changed because it had not found.

"Perhaps it is impossible really to love any one but a virgin—a virgin in body and mind—a frail bud which no zephyr has as yet caressed, and the closed bosom of which has received neither raindrop nor pearly dew, a chaste flower which unfolds its white robe for you alone, a fair lily with silver urn wherein no desire has been quenched, and which has been gilded only by your sun, rocked only by your breath, watered only by your hand. The radiance of noon is not worth the divine paleness of dawn, and all the fervour of a soul that has experience and knowledge of life yields to the heavenly ignorance of a young heart that is waking up

to love. Ah! what a bitter and shameful thought is it that you are wiping away the kisses of another, that there is not, perhaps, a single spot on this brow, these lips, this throat, these shoulders, on this whole body which is yours now, that has not been reddened and marked by strange lips; that these divine murmurs coming to the assistance of the tongue, whose words have failed, have been heard before; that these senses, which are so greatly moved, have not learned their ecstasy and their delirium from you, and that deep down, far away in the retirement of one of these recesses of the soul that are never visited, there watches an inexorable recollection which compares the pleasures of former times with the pleasures of to-day!

"Although my natural supineness leads me to prefer high roads to unbeaten paths, and a public drinking-fountain to a mountain spring, I must absolutely try to love some virginal creature as pure as snow, as trembling as the sensitive plant, who can only blush, and cast down her eyes. Perhaps beneath this limpid flood, into which no diver has yet gone down, I may fish up a pearl of the purest water and fit to be the fellow of Cleopatra's; but to do this I should loose the bond that ties me to Rosette,—for it is not probable that I shall realise my wish with her,—and I do not in truth feel the power to do so.

"And then, if I must confess it, I have at bottom a secret and shameful motive which dares not come forth into the light, and which I must nevertheless mention to you, seeing that I have promised to hide nothing from you, and that a confession to be meritorious must be complete—a motive which counts for much amid all this uncertainty. If I break with Rosette, some time must necessarily elapse before she can be replaced, however compliant may be the kind of woman in whom I shall seek for her successor, and with her I have made pleasure a habit which I should find it painful to interrupt. It is, of course, possible to fall back upon courtesan—I liked them well enough once, and did not spare them on a like emergency—but now they disgust me horribly, and give me nausea. Having tasted of a more refined though still impure passion, such creatures are not

again to be thought of. On the other hand, I cannot endure the idea of being one or two months without a woman for my companion. This is egoism, and of a depraved description; but I believe that the most virtuous, if they would be frank, might make somewhat analogous confessions.

"By Rosette's side I experience that dull calm, and that kind of lazy comfort which results from the gratification of the senses, but nothing more; and this is not enough. Often this voluptuous enervation turns to torpor, and this tranquillity to weariness; and I then fall into purposeless absence of mind, and into a kind of dull dreaming which fatigues me and wears me out. It is a condition that I must get out of at all costs.

"Oh! if I could be like certain of my friends who kiss an old glove with intoxication, who are rendered completely happy by the pressure of the hand, who would not exchange a few paltry flowers, half withered by the perspiration of the ball, for a Sultana's jewel-box, who cover with their tears and sew into their shirts, just over their hearts, a note written in wretched style, and stupid enough to have been copied from the 'Complete Letter Writer,' who worship women with big feet, and excuse themselves for doing so on the ground that they have a beautiful soul!

"Only one thing have I ever asked of women—beauty; I am very willing to dispense with wit and soul. For me a woman who is beautiful has always wit; she has the wit to be beautiful, and I know of none that is equal to this. It would take many brilliant phrases and sparkling flashes to make up the worth of the lightning from a beautiful eye. I prefer a pretty mouth to a pretty word, and a well-modelled shoulder to a virtue, even a theological one; I would give fifty souls for a delicate foot, and all our poetry and poets for the hand of Jeanne d'Aragon or the brow of the Virgin of Foligno. I worship beauty of form above all things; beauty is to me visible divinity, palpable happiness, heaven come down upon earth. There are certain undulating outlines, delicate lips, curved eyelids, inclinations of the head, and extended ovals which ravish me

beyond all expression, and engage me for whole hours at a time.

"Beauty, the only thing that cannot be acquired, inaccessible for ever to those who are without it at first; ephemeral and fragile flower which grows without being sown, pure gift of heaven! O beauty! the most radiant diadem wherewith chance could crown a brow—thou art admirable and precious like all that is beyond the reach of man, like the azure of the firmament, like the gold of the star, like the perfume of the seraphic lily! We may exchange a stool for a throne; we may conquer the world, and many have done so; but who could refrain from kneeling before thee, pure personification of the thought of God?

"I ask for nothing but beauty, it is true; but I must have it so perfect that I shall probably never find it. Here and there I have seen, in a few women, portions that were admirable accompanied by what was commonplace, and I have loved them for the choice parts that they had, without taking the rest into account; it is, however, a rather painful task and sorrowful operation to suppress half of one's mistress in this way, and mentally to amputate whatever is ugly or ordinary in her by confining one's gaze to whatever goodness she may possess. Beauty is harmony, and a person who is equally ugly throughout is often less disagreeable to look at than a woman who is unequally beautiful. No sight gives me so much pain as that of an unfinished masterpiece, or of beauty which is wanting in something; a spot of oil offends less on a coarse drugget than on a rich material.

"Rosette is not bad; she might pass for being beautiful, but she is far from realising my dream; she is a statue, several portions of which have been finished to a nicety. The rest has not been wrought so clearly out of the block; there are some parts indicated with much delicacy and charm, and others in a more slovenly and negligent fashion. In the eyes of the vulgar the statue appears entirely finished, and its beauty complete; but a more attentive observer discovers many places where the work is not close enough, and outlines which, to attain to the purity that they ought

to possess, would need the nail of the workman to pass and re-pass many more times over them; it is for love to polish this marble and complete it, which is as much as to say that it will not be I who will finish it.

"For the rest I do not limit beauty to any particular sinuosity of lines. Mien, gesture, walk, breath, colour, tone, perfume, all that life is enters into the composition of my ideal; everything that has fragrance that sings, or that is radiant belongs to it as a matter of course. I love rich brocades, splendid tuffs with their ample and powerful folds; I love large flowers and scent-boxes, the transparency of spring water, the reflecting splendour of fine armour, thoroughbred horses and large white dogs such as we see in the pictures of Paul Veronese. I am a true pagan in this respect, and I in no wise adore gods that are badly made. Although I am not at bottom exactly what is called irreligious, no one is in fact a worse Christian than I.

I would people my canvases only with goddesses, nymphs, madonnas, cherubs, and cupids. To devote one's brush to the making of portraits, unless they be those of beautiful persons, appears to me high treason against the art; and, far from wishing to double ugly or ignoble faces, and insignificant and vulgar heads, I should be more inclined to have them cut off the originals. Caligula's ferocity turned in this direction would seem to me almost laudable.

"The only thing in the world that I have ever wished for with any consistency is to be handsome. By handsome, I mean as handsome as Paris or Apollo. To be free from deformity, and to have tolerably regular features, *i.e.*, to have one's nose in the middle of one's face, and neither snub nor hooked, eyes neither red nor blood-shot, and a mouth becomingly cut, is not to be handsome. At this rate I should be so, and I am as remote from the idea that I have formed of manly beauty as if I were one of the clock-jacks that strike the hour on the bells; I might have a mountain on each shoulder, legs as crooked as those of a turnspit, and the nose and muzzle of an ape, and yet have as close a resemblance to it.

"I often look at myself in the glass for whole hours, with

unimaginable fixity and attention to see whether some improvement has not taken place in my face; I wait for the lines to make a movement and become straighter or rounder with more delicacy and purity, for my eye to light up and swim in a more vivacious fluid, for the sinuosity that separates my forehead from my nose to be filled up, and for my profile thus to assume the stillness and simplicity of the Greek profile, and I am always very much surprised that this does not happen. I am always hoping that some spring or other I shall lay aside the form that I have, as a serpent sheds his old skin.

"To think that I want so little to be handsome, and that I shall never be so! What! half a line, a hundredth or a thousandth part of a line more or less in one place or another, a little less flesh on this bone, a little more on that—a painter or a statuary would have settled the affair in half an hour. What mattered it to the atoms composing me to crystalise in such or such a way? How did it concern this outline to come out here and to go in there, and where was the necessity that I should be as I am and not different? In truth if I had Chance by the throat I think I should strangle it. Because it has pleased a wretched particle of I know not what to fall I know not where, and to coagulate foolishly into the clumsy countenance that I display, I am to be unhappy for ever! Is it not the most foolish and miserable thing in the world? How is it that my soul, with her eager longing for it, cannot let the poor carrion that she keeps upright fall prostrate, and go and animate one of those statues whose exquisite beauty saddens and ravishes her?

"There are two or three persons whom I would assassinate with delight, being careful, however, not to bruise or spoil them, if I were in possession of the word that would effect the transmigration of souls from one body to the other. It has always seemed to me that to do what I wish (and what that is I do not know), I had need of very great and perfect beauty, and I imagine to myself that, if I had it, my life, which is so fettered and tormented, would have been left in peace.

"We see so many beautiful faces in pictures!—why is none of them mine?—so many charming heads hidden beneath the dust and smoke of time in the depths of the old galleries! Would it not be better if they left their frame and came and expanded on my shoulders? Would Raphaël's reputation suffer very much if one of the angels that he makes to fly in swarms in the ultramarine of his canvases, were to give up his mask to me for thirty years? So many of the most beautiful parts of his frescoes have peeled off and fallen away from old age! No one would heed it. What are these silent beauties, upon which common men bestow scarce a heedless glance, doing around these walls? and why has God or chance not wit enough to do what a man has accomplished with a few hairs fitted on a stick as a handle, and a few pastes of different colours tempered on a board?

"To be handsome means to have in one's-self so great a charm that every one smiles on you and welcomes you, that before you have spoken everybody is already prepossessed in your favour and disposed to be of your opinion; that you have only to pass through a street or show yourself on a balcony to create friends or mistresses for you in the crowd. To have no need of being amiable in order to be loved, to be exempt from all the expenditure of wit and complaisance to which ugliness compels you, and from the thousand moral qualities which are necessary to make up for the absence of personal beauty;—what a splendid and magnificent gift!

"All the passions and tastes that I have had have been merely these three longings disguised. I liked weapons, horses, and women: weapons to take the place of the sinews that I lacked; horses to serve me instead of wings; women that I might at least possess in somebody the beauty that was wanting in myself. I sought in preference the most ingeniously murderous weapons, and those which inflicted incurable wounds. I never had an opportunity of making use of a kris or yataghan: nevertheless I like to have them about me; I draw them from the sheath with a feeling of unspeakable security and strength, I fence with them at random with great energy, and if I chance to see the reflection of my face in a glass, I am astonished at its ferocious expression.

"As to horses, I so override them that they must die or tell the reason why. If I had not given up riding Ferragus he would have been dead long ago, and that would have been a pity, for he is a good animal. What Arab horse could have legs so ready and so slender as my desire? In women I have sought nothing but the exterior, and as those that I have seen up to the present are far from answering to the idea that I have formed of beauty, I have fallen back on pictures and statues;—a resource which is after all pitiful enough when one has senses so inflamed as mine. However, there is something grand and beautiful in loving a statue, in that the love is perfectly disinterested, that you have not to dread the satiety or disgust of victory, and that you cannot reasonably hope for a second wonder similar to the story of Pygmalion. The impossible has always pleased me.

"Is it not an inexplicable thing that a child, born of virtuous parents, brought up with care and discretion, and kept away from everything bad, should be perverted of himself to such a degree, and come to be what I am now? I am sure that if you went back as far as the sixth generation you would not find a single atom among my ancestors similar to those of which I am formed. I do not belong to my family; I am not a branch of that noble trunk, but a poisonous toadstool sprung up amid its moss-grown roots some heavy, stormy night; and yet no one has ever had more aspirations and soarings after the beautiful than I, no one has ever tried more stubbornly to spread his wings; but each attempt has made my fall the greater, and I have been lost through what ought to have saved me.

"Solitude is worse for me than society, although I wish for the first more than for the second. Everything that takes me out of myself is wholesome for me; companionship wearies me, but it snatches me away perforce from the vain dreaming, whose spiral I ascend and descend with bended brow and folded arms. Thus, since the *tête-à-tête* has been broken off, and there have been people here with whom I am obliged to put some constraint upon myself, I have been less liable to give myself up to my gloomy moods, and have been less tormented by the inordinate

desires which swoop upon my heart like a cloud of vultures as soon as I am unoccupied for a moment.

"There are some rather pretty women, and one or two young fellows who are amiable enough and very gay; but in all this country swarm I am most charmed by a young cavalier who arrived two or three days ago. He pleased me from the very first, and I took a fancy to him, merely on seeing him dismount from his horse. It would be impossible to be more graceful; he is not very tall, but he is slender and has a good figure; there is something soft and undulating in his walk and gestures which is most agreeable; many women might envy him his hands and feet. The only fault that he has is that he is too beautiful, and has too delicate features for a man. He is provided with a pair of the finest and darkest eyes in the world, which have an indefinable expression, and whose gaze it is difficult to sustain; but as he is very young and has no appearance of a beard, the softness and perfection of the lower part of his face tempers somewhat the vivacity of his eagle eyes; his brown and lustrous hair flows over his neck in great ringlets, and gives a peculiar character to his head.

"Here, then, is at last one of the types of beauty that I dreamed of realised and walking before me! What pity it is that he is a man, or rather that I am not a woman! This Adonis, who to his beautiful face unites a very lively and far-reaching wit, enjoys the further privilege of being able to utter his jests and pleasantries in silvery and thrilling tones which it is difficult to hear without emotion. He is truly perfect.

"He appears to share my taste for beautful things, for his clothes are very rich and refined, his horse very frisky and thorough-bred; and, that everything might be complete and harmonious, he had a page fourteen or fifteen years old mounted on a pony behind him, fair, rosy, as pretty as a seraph, half asleep, and so fatigued with his ride, that his master was obliged to lift him off the saddle and carry him in his arms to his room. Rosette, received him very kindly, and I think that she intends to make use of him to rouse my jealousy and in this way bring out the little

flame that sleeps beneath the ashes of my extinguished passion. Nevertheless, formidable as such a rival may be, I am little disposed to be jealous of him, and I feel so drawn towards him that I would willingly enough abandon my love to have his friendship."

6

....The little page was so worn out that he slept in his master's arms, his little head all dishevelled, swaying to and fro as though he were dead. It was some distance from the flight of steps to the room which had been assigned to the new arrival, and the servant who showed him the way offered to carry the child in his turn; but the young cavalier, to whom, moreover, the burden seemed but a feather, thanked him and would not relinquish it. He laid him down very gently on the couch, taking a thousand precautions not to awake him; a mother could not have done better. When the servant had retired and the door was shut, he knelt down in front of him and tried to draw off his boots; but the little feet, which were swelled and painful, rendered this operation somewhat difficult, and the pretty sleeper from time to time heaved vague and inarticulate sighs like one about to wake; then the young cavalier would stop and wait until sleep had again overpowered him. The boots yielded at last, this was the most important; the stockings offered only a slight resistance.

This operation accomplished, the master took both the child's feet and laid them beside each other on the velvet of the sofa; they were quite the most adorable pair of feet in the world, as small as could be, as white as new ivory and a little rosy from the pressure of the boots in which they had been imprisoned for seventeen hours—feet too small for a woman, and which looked as though they had never walked;

what was seen of the leg was round, plump, smooth, transparent, veiny, and most exquisitely delicate; a leg worthy of the foot.

The young man, who was still on his knees, regarded these two little feet with loving and admiring attention; he bent down, took the left one and kissed it, then the right and kissed it also; and then with kisses after kisses he went back along the leg as far as the place where the cloth began. The page raised his long eyelash a little and cast upon his master a kind and drowsy look in which no surprise was apparent. "My belt is uncomfortable," he said, passing his finger beneath the ribbon, and fell asleep again. The master unfastened the belt, raised the page's head with a cushion, and touching his feet which, burning as they were before, had become rather cold, wrapped them up carefully in his cloak, took an easy-chair and sat down as close as possible to the sofa. Two hours passed in this way, the young man looking at the sleeping child and following the shadows of his dreams upon his brow. The only noise that was heard in the room was his regular breathing and the tick-tack of the clock.

It was certainly a very graceful picture. There was a means for effect in the contrast of these two kinds of beauty that a skilful painter would have turned to good account. The master was as beautiful as a woman, the page as beautiful as a young girl. The round and rosy head, set thus in its hair, looked like a peach beneath its leaves; it was as fresh and as velvety, though the fatigue of the journey had robbed it of its usual brilliance; the half-opened mouth showed little teeth of milky whiteness, and beneath his full and glossy temples a network of azure veins crossed one another; his eyelashes, which were like the golden threads that are spread round the heads of virgins in the missals, reached nearly to the middle of his cheeks; his long and silky hair resembled both gold and silver—gold in the shade and silver in the light; his neck was at once fat and frail, and had nothing of the sex that was indicated by his dress: two or three buttons, unfastened to facilitate respiration, allowed a lozenge of plump and rounded flesh of wonder-

ful whiteness to be seen through the hiatus in a shirt of fine Holland linen, as well as the beginning of a certain curving line difficult of explanation of the bosom of a young boy; looking carefully at him it might also have been found that his hips were a little too much developed.

The cavalier was pale, but of a golden paleness full of vigour and life; his pupils swam in a blue, crystalline humour; his straight and delicate nose imparted wonderful pride and energy to his profile, and its flesh was so fine that at the edge of the outline it suffered the light to pierce through; his mouth had, at certain moments, the sweetest of smiles, but usually it was arched at the corners, inwards rather than outwards, like some of the heads that we see in the pictures of the old Italian masters; and this gave him a little look of adorable disdain, a most piquant *smorfia*, an air of childish pouting and ill-humour, which was very singular and very charming.

"The dear angel, how he sleeps!" said the young man in a low voice; "I don't think that he has ever travelled so far in his life. Twenty leagues on horseback, he who is so delicate! I am afraid that he will be ill from fatigue. But no, it will be nothing; there will be no sign of it to-morrow; he will have recovered his beautiful colour, and be fresher than a rose after rain. How beautiful he is so! If I were not afraid of awaking him, I would eat him up with caresses. What an adorable dimple he has on his chin! what delicacy and whiteness of skin! Sleep well, dear treasure. Ah! I am truly jealous of your mother and I wish that I had made you. He is not ill? No; his breathing is regular, and he does not stir. But I think some one knocked——"

And indeed two little taps had been given as softly as possible on the panel of the door.

The young man rose, and, fearing that he was mistaken, delayed opening until there should be another knock. Two other taps, a little more accentuated, were heard again, and a woman's soft voice said in a very low tone: "It is I, Théodore."

Théodore opened the door, but with less eagerness than is usual with a young man opening to a young woman with a

gentle voice who comes scratching mysteriously at his door towards nightfall. The folding door, being half-opened, gave passage to whom, think you?—to the mistress of the perplexed D'Albert, the Princess Rosette in person, rosier than her name, and her bosom as moved as was ever that of a woman entering at evening the room of a handsome cavalier.

"Théodore!" said Rosette.

Théodore raised his finger and laid it on his lips, so that he looked like a statue of silence, and, showing her the sleeping child, conducted her into the next room.

"Théodore," resumed Rosette, who seemed to find singular pleasure in repeating the name, and to be seeking at the same time to collect her ideas. "Théodore," she continued, without releasing the hand which the young man had offered to her to lead her to an easy-chair, "so you have at last come back to us? What have you been doing all this time? where have you been? Do you know that I have not seen you for six months? Ah! Théodore, that is not well; some consideration and some pity is due to those who love us even though we do not love them."

THEODORE— "What have I been doing? I do not know. I have come and gone, slept and waked, wept and sung, I have been hungry and thirsty, too hot and too cold, I have been weary, I have less money, and am six months older, I have been living and that is all. And you, what have you been doing?"

ROSETTE—"I have been loving you."

THEODORE—"You have done nothing else?"

ROSETTE—"Absolutely nothing else. I have been employing my time badly, have I not?"

THEODORE—"You might have employed it better, my poor Rosette; for instance in loving some one who could return your love."

ROSETTE—"I am disinterested in love, as I am in everything. I do not lend love on usury; I give it as a pure gift."

THEODORE—"That is a very rare virtue, and one which can only spring up in a chosen soul. I have often wished to be able to love you, at least in the way that you would like; but there is an insurmountable obstacle between us which I

cannot explain to you. Have you had another lover since I left you?"

ROSETTE—"I have had one whom I have still."

THEODORE—"What sort of man is he?"

ROSETTE—"A poet."

THEODORE—"The devil! what kind of poet, and what has he written?"

ROSETTE—"I do not quite know; a sort of volume that nobody is acquainted with, and that I tried to read one evening."

THEODORE—"So you have an unknown poet for your lover. That must be curious. Has he holes at his elbows, dirty linen, and stockings like the screw of a press?"

ROSETTE—"No; he dresses pretty well, washes his hands, and has no inkspots on the tip of his nose. He is a friend of C——'s; I met him at Madame de Thémines's house; you know a big woman who acts the child and puts on little innocent airs."

THEODORE—"And might one know the name of this glorious personage?"

ROSETTE—"Oh, dear, yes! He is called the Chevalier d'Albert."

THEODORE—"The Chevalier d'Albert! It seems to me that he is the young man who was on the balcony when I was dismounting."

ROSETTE—"Exactly."

THEODORE—"And who looked at me with such attention."

ROSETTE—"Himself."

THEODORE—"He is well enough.—And he has not caused me to be forgotten?"

ROSETTE—"No. You are unfortunately not one of those who can be forgotten."

THEODORE—"He is very fond of you, no doubt?"

ROSETTE—"I am not quite sure. There are times when you would think that he loved me very much; but in reality he does not love me, and he is not far from hating me, for he bears me ill-will because of his inability to love me. He has acted like many others more experienced than he; he mistook a keen liking for passion, and was quite surprised and

disappointed when his desire was satisfied. It is a mistake to think that people must continue worshipping each other after they have become thoroughly satiated."

THEODORE—"And what do you intend to do with this said lover, who is not in love?"

ROSETTE—"What is done with the old quarters of the moon, or with last year's fashions? He is not strong enough to leave me the first, and, although he does not love me in the true sense of the word, he is attached to me by a habit of pleasure, and such habits are the most difficult to break. If I do not assist him he is capable of wearying himself conscientiously with me until the day of the last judgement, and even beyond it; for he has the germ of every noble quality in him; and the flowers of his soul seek only to blossom in the sunshine of everlasting love. Really, I am sorry that I was not the ray for him. Of all my lovers that I did not love, I love him the most; and if I were not so good as I am I should not give him back his liberty, and should keep him still. I shall not do so; I am at this moment finishing with him."

THEODORE—"How long will that last?"

ROSETTE—"A fortnight or three weeks, but certainly a shorter time than it would have lasted had you not come. I know that I shall never be your mistress. For this, you say, there is a secret reason to which I would submit if you were permitted to reveal it to me. All hope must therefore be forbidden me in this respect, and yet I cannot make up my mind to be the mistress of another when you are present: it seems to me that it is a profanation and that I have no longer any right to love you."

THEODORE—"Keep him for the love of me."

ROSETTE—"If it gives you pleasure I will do so. Ah! if you could have been mine, how different would my life have been from what it has been! The world has a very false idea of me, and I shall pass away without any one suspecting what I was—except you, Théodore, who alone have understood me, and have been cruel to me. I have never desired anyone but you for my lover, and I have not had you. If you had loved me, Théodore! I should have been virtuous

and chaste, I should have been worthy of you. Instead of that I shall leave behind me (if any one remembers me) the reputation of a gay woman, a sort of courtesan who differed from the one of the gutter only in rank and fortune. I was born with the loftiest inclinations; but nothing corrupts like not being loved. Many despise me without knowing what I must have suffered in order to come to be what I am. Being sure that I should never belong to him whom I preferred above all others. I abandoned myself to the stream, I did not take the trouble to protect a body that could not be yours. As to my heart nobody has had it, or ever will have it. It is yours, though you have broken it; and unlike most of the women who think themselves virtuous, provided that they have not passed from the arms of one man to those of another, I have always been faithful in soul and heart to the thought of you.

"I have at least made some persons happy, I have sent fair illusions dancing round some pillows, I have innocently deceived more than one noble heart; I was so wretched at being repulsed by you that I was always terrified at the idea of subjecting anyone to similar torture. That was the only motive for many adventures which have been attributed to a pure spirit of libertinism! I! libertinism!! O world! If you knew, Théodore, how profoundly painful it is to feel that you have missed your life, and passed your happiness by, to see that everyone is mistaken concerning you and that it is impossible to change the opinion that people have of you, that your finest qualities are turned into faults, your purest essences into black poisons, and that what is bad in you has alone transpired; to find the doors always open to your vices and always closed to your virtues, and to be unable to bring a single lily or rose to good amid so much hemlock and aconite!—you do not know this, Théodore."

THEODORE—"Alas! alas! what you say, Rosette, is the history of everyone; the best part of us is that which remains within us, and which we cannot bring forth. It is so with poets. Their finest poem is one that they have not written; they carry away more poems in their coffins than they leave in their libraries."

ROSETTE—"I shall carry my poems away with me."

THEODORE—"And I, mine. Who has not made one in his lifetime? who is so happy or so unhappy that he has not composed one of his own in his head or his heart? Executioners perhaps have made some that are moist with the tears of the tenderost sensibility; and poets perhaps have made some which would have been suitable for executioners, so red and monstrous are they."

ROSETTE—"Yes. They might put white roses on my tomb. I have had ten lovers—but I am a virgin, and shall die one. Many virgins, upon whose tombs there falls a perpetual snow of jessamine and orange blossom, were veritable Messalinas.'

THEODORE—"I know your worth, Rosette."

ROSETTE—"You are the only one in the world who has seen what I am; for you have seen me under the blow of a very true and deep love, since it is without hope; and one who has not seen a woman in love cannot tell what she is; it is this that comforts me in my bitterness."

THEODORE—"And what does this young man think of you who, in the eyes of the world, is at present your lover?"

ROSETTE—"A lover's thought is a deeper gulf than the Bay of Portugal, and it is very difficult to say what there is at bottom in a man; you might fasten the sounding-lead to a cord a hundred thousand fathoms long, and reel it off to the end, and it would still run without meeting anything to stop it. Yet in his case I have occasionally touched the bottom at places, and the lead has brought back sometimes mud and sometimes beautiful shells, but oftenest mud with fragments of coral mingled together. As to his opinion of me it has greatly varied; he began at first where others end, he despised me; young people who possess a lively imagination are liable to do this. There is always a tremendous downfall in the first step that they take, and the passage of their chimera into reality cannot be accomplished without a shock. He despised me, and I amused him: now he esteems me, and I weary him.

"In the first days of our union he saw only my vulgar side, and I think that the certainty of meeting with no resistance counted for much in his determination. He appeared ex-

tremely eager to have an affair, and I thought at first that it was one of those plenitudes of heart which seek but to overflow, one of those vague loves which people have in the May-month of youth, and which lead them, in the absence of women, to encircle the trunks of trees with their arms, and kiss the flowers and grass in the meadows. But it was not that; he was only passing through me to arrive at something else. I was a road for him, and not an end. Beneath the fresh appearance of his twenty years, beneath the first dawn of adolescence, he concealed profound corruption. He was worm-eaten at the core; he was a fruit that contained nothing but ashes. In that young and vigorous body there struggled a soul as old as Saturn's,—a soul as incurably unhappy as ever there existed.

"I confess to you, Théodore, that I was frightened and was almost seized with giddiness as I leaned over the dark depths of that life. Your griefs and mine are nothing in comparision with his. Had I loved him more I should have killed him. Something that is not of this world nor in this world attracts him, and calls him, and will take no denial; he cannot rest by night or by day; and, like a heliotrope in a celler, he twists himself that he may turn towards the sun that he does not see. He is one of those men whose soul was not dipped completely enough in the waters of Lethe before being united to his body; from the heaven whence it comes it preserves recollections of eternal beauty which harass and torment it, and it remembers that it once had wings, and now has only feet. If I were God, the angel guilty of such negligence should be deprived of poetry for two eternities. Instead of having to build a castle of brilliantly coloured cards to shelter a fair young fantasy for a single spring, a tower should have been built more lofty than the eight superposed temples of Belus. I was not strong enough, I appeared not to have understood him, I let him creep on his pinions and seek for a summit whence he might spring into the immensity of space.

"He believes that I have seen nothing of all this because I have lent myself to all his caprices without seeming to suspect their aim. Being unable to cure him, I wished, and I

hope that this will be taken into account some day before God, to give him at least the happiness of believing that he had been passionately loved. He inspired me with sufficient pity and interest to enable me to assume with him tones and manners tender enough to delude him. I played my part like a consummate actress; I was sportive and melancholy, sensitive and voluptuous; I feigned disquiet and jealousy; I shed false tears, and called to my lips swarms of affected smiles. I attired this puppet of love in the richest stuffs; I made it walk in the avenues of my parks; I invited all my birds to sing as it passed, and all my dahlias and daturas to salute it by bending their heads; I had to cross my lake on the silvery back of my darling swan; I concealed myself within, and lent it my voice, my wit, my beauty, my youth, and gave it so seductive an appearance that the reality was not so good as my falsehood.

"When the time comes to shiver this hollow statue I shall do it in such a way that he will believe all the wrong to be on my side, and will be spared remorse. I shall myself give the prick of the pin through which the air that fills this balloon will escape. Is this not meritorious and honourable deception? I have a crystal urn containing a few tears which I collected at the moment when they were about to fall. They are my jewel-box and diamonds, and I shall present them to the angel who comes to take me away to God."

THEODORE—"Drive away, poor afflicted one, these gloomy thoughts which hover like bats about you, and shed the opaque shadow of their wings upon your brow. If you wish me to love you, be happy, and do not weep." (He draws her gently to him and kisses her on the eyes.)

ROSETTE—"What a misfortune it is to me to have known you! and yet, were it to be done over again, I should still wish to have known you. Your severity has been sweeter to me than the passion of others; and, although you have caused me much suffering, all the pleasure that I have had has come to me from you; through you I have had a glimpse of what I might have been. You have been a lightning-flash in my night, and you have lit up many of the dark places of my soul; you have opened up vistas in my life that are

quite new. To you I owe the knowledge of love, unhappy love, it is true; but there is a deep and melancholy charm in loving without being loved, and it is good to remember those who forget us. It is a happiness to be able to love even when you are the only one who loves, and many die without having experienced it, and often the most to be pitied are not those who love."

THEODORE—"They suffer and feel their wounds, but at least they live. They hold to something; they have a star around which they gravitate, a pole to which they eagerly tend. They have something to wish for; they can say to themselves· 'If I arrive there, if I have that, I shall be happy.' They have frightful agonies, but when dying, they can at least say to themselves: 'I die for him.' To die thus is to be born again. The really, the only irreparably unhappy ones are those whose foolish embrace takes in the entire universe, those who wish for everything and wish for nothing, and who, if angel or fairy were to descend and say suddenly to them: 'Wish for something and you shall have it,' would be embarrassed and mute."

ROSETTE—"If the fairy came, I know what I should ask her."

THEODORE—"You do, Rosette, and in that respect you are more fortunate than I, for I do not. Vague desires stir within me which blend together, and give birth to others which afterwards devour them. My desires are a cloud of birds whirling and hovering aimlessly; your desire is an eagle who has his eyes on the sun, and who is prevented by the lack of air from rising on his outstretched wings. Ah! if I could know what I want; if the idea which pursues me would extricate itself clear and precise from the fog that envelops it; if the fortunate or fatal star would appear in the depths of my sky; if the light which I am to follow, whether perfidious will-o'-the-wisp or hospitable beacon, would come and be radiant in the night; if my pillar of fire would go before me, even though it were across a desert without manna and without springs; if I knew whither I am going, though I were only to come to a precipice!—I would rather have the mad riding of accursed huntsmen through quag-

mires and thickets than this absurd and monotonous movement of the feet. To live in this way is to follow a calling like that of those horses which turn the wheel of some well with bandaged eyes, and travel thousands of leagues without seeing anything or changing their situation. I have been turning for a long time, and the bucket should have quite come up."

ROSETTE—"You have many points of resemblance with D'Albert, and when you speak it seems to me sometimes as though he were the speaker. I have no doubt that when you are further acquainted with him you will become much attached to him; you cannot fail to suit each other. He is harassed as you are by these aimless flights; he loves immensely without knowing what; he would ascend to heaven, for the earth appears to him a stool scarcely good enough for one of his feet, and he has more pride than Lucifer before his fall."

THEODORE—"I was at first afraid that he was one of those numerous poets who have driven poetry from the earth, one of those stringers of sham pearls who can see nothing in the world but the last syllables of words, and who when they have rhymed *glade* with *shade*, *flame* with *name*, and *God* with *trod*, conscientiously cross their legs and arms and suffer the spheres to complete their revolution."

ROSETTE—"He is not one of those. His verses are inferior to him and do not contain him. What he has written would give you a very false idea of his own person; his true poem is himself, and I do not know whether he will ever compose another. In the recesses of his soul he has a seraglio of beautiful ideas which he surrounds with a triple wall, and of which he is more jealous than was ever sultan of his odalisques. He only puts those into his verses which he does not care about or which have repulsed him; it is the door through which he drives them away, and the world has only those which he will keep no longer."

THEODORE—"I can understand this jealousy and shame. In the same way many people do not acknowledge the love they had until they have it no longer, nor their mistresses until they are dead."

Rosette—"It is so difficult to possess a thing alone in this world! every torch attracts so many butterflies, and every treasure so many thieves! I like those silent ones who carry their idea into their grave, and will not surrender it to the foul kisses and shameless touches of the crowd. I am delighted with the lovers who do not write their mistress's name on any bark, nor confide it to any echo, and who, when sleeping, are pursued by the dread lest they should utter it in a dream. I am one of the number; I have never spoken my thought, and none shall know my love—but see, it is nearly eleven o'clock, my dear Théodore, and I am preventing you from taking the rest that you must need. When I am obliged to leave you, I always feel a heaviness of heart, and it seems to me the last time that I shall see you. I delay the parting as much as possible; but one must part at last. Well, good-bye, for I am afraid that D'Albert will be looking for me; dear friend, good-bye."

Théodore put his arm about her waist, and led her thus to the door; there he stopped, following her for a long time with his gaze; the corridor was pierced at wide intervals with little narrow-paned windows, which were lit up by the moon, and made a very fantastic alternation of light and shade. At each window Rosette's white, pure form shone like a silver phantom; then it would vanish to reappear with greater brilliance a little further off; at last it disappeared altogether.

Théodore, seemingly lost in deep thought, remained motionless for a few minutes with folded arms; then he passed his hand over his forehead and threw back his hair with a movement of his head, re-entered the room, and went to bed after kissing the brow of the page who was still asleep.

7

As soon as it was light at Rosette's, D'Albert had himself announced with a promptness that was not usual with him.

"Here you are," said Rosette, "and I should say you are early, if you could ever come early. And so, to reward you for your gallantry, I grant you my hand to kiss."

And from beneath the lace-trimmed sheet of Flanders linen, she drew the prettiest little hand that was ever seen at the end of a round, plump arm.

"The Chevalier Théodore de Sérannes," said a big negro's head, smiling and chubby-faced, appearing between the leaves of the folding-door, "wishes to pay his respects to you and entreats you to condescend to receive him."

"Ask the chevalier to come in," said Rosette, drawing up the sheet to her chin.

Théodore first went up to Rosette's bed and made her a most profound and graceful bow, to which she returned a friendly nod, and then turned towards D'Albert, and saluted him also with a free and courteous air.

"Where were you?" said Théodore. "I have perhaps interrupted an interesting conversation. Pray continue, and acquaint me with the subject of it in a few words."

"Oh, no!" replied Rosette with a mischievous smile; "we were talking of business."

Théodore sat down at the foot of Rosette's bed, for D'Albert had placed himself beside the pillow, as being the first arrival; the conversation wandered for some time from subject to subject, and was very witty, very gay and very lively, which is the reason why we shall not give any account of it; we should be afraid that it would lose too much if transcribed.

Théodore was such a handsome cavalier that it was difficult to see him appearing in a connection without being apprehensive of what had, in fact, often happened already,

apprehensive, that is, lest all eyes should be turned upon him and all hearts follow the eyes; and it was a singular thing that, although he had carried off many women, no lover had ever maintained towards him the lasting resentment which is usually entertained towards those who have supplanted you. In all his ways there was such a conquering charm, such natural grace, and something so sweet and proud, that even men were sensible of it. D'Albert, who had come to see Rosette with the intention of speaking to Théodore with tartness, should he meet him there, was quite surprised to find himself free from the slightest impulse of anger in his presence, and so ready to receive the advances that were made to him.

"What shall we do to-day, Théodore?" said Rosette; "suppose we take a sail? what do you think? or we might go hunting?"

"Let us go hunting, it is less melancholy than gliding over the water side by side with some languid swan, and bending the leaves of the water-lilies right and left,—is that not your opinion, D'Albert?"

"I might perhaps prefer to flow along in the boat with the current of the stream to galloping desperately in pursuit of a poor beast; but I will go where you go. We have now only to let Madame Rosette get up, and assume a suitable costume."

Rosette gave a sign of assent, and rang to have herself dressed. The two young men went off arm-in-arm, and it was easy to guess, seeing them so friendly together, that one was the formal lover and the other the beloved lover of the same person.

Everyone was soon ready. D'Albert and Théodore were already mounted in the first court when Rosette appeared in a riding-habit, on the top of the flight of steps. She had a little sprightly and easy air in this costume which became her very well. She leaped upon the saddle with her usual agility, and gave a switch to her horse which started off like an arrow, D'Albret struck in both his spurs and soon rejoined her. Théodore allowed them to get some way ahead, being sure of catching them up as soon as he wished

to do so. He seemed to be waiting for something, and often looked round towards the mansion.

"Théodore, Théodore, come on! are you riding a wooden horse?" cried Rosette.

Théodore gave his animal a gallop, and diminished the distance separating him from Rosette, without, however, causing it to disappear.

He again looked towards the mansion of which they were beginning to lose sight; a little whirlwind of dust, in which something that could not yet be discerned was in very hasty motion, appeared at the end of the road. In a few moments it was at Théodore's side, and opening up, like the classic clouds in the Iliad, displayed the fresh and rosy face of the mysterious page.

"Théodore, come along!" cried Rosette a second time, "give your tortoise the spur and come up beside us."

Théodore gave the rein to his horse which was pawing and rearing with impatience, and in a few seconds he was several heads in advance of D'Albert and Rosette.

"Whoever loves me will follow me," said Théodore, leaping a fence four feet high. "Well, sir poet," he said, when he was on the other side, "you do not jump? Yet your mount has wings, so people say."

"Faith! I would rather go round; I have only one head to break after all; if I had several I should try," replied D'Albert, smiling.

"Nobody loves me then, since nobody follows me," said Théodore, drawing down the arched corners of his mouth even more than usual. The little page raised his large blue eyes towards him with a look of reproach, and brought his heels against his horse's sides.

The horse gave a prodigious bound.

"Yes! somebody," he said to him on the other side of the fence.

Rosette cast a singular look upon the child and blushed up to her eyes; then, giving a furious stroke with her whip on the neck of her mare, she crossed the bar of apple-green wood which fenced the avenue.

"And I, Théodore, do you think that I do not love you?"

The child cast a sly side-glance at her, and drew close to Théodore.

D'Albert was already in the middle of the avenue, and saw nothing of all this; for, from time immemorial, fathers, husbands, and lovers have been possessed of the privilege of seeing nothing.

"Isnabel," said Théodore, "you are mad, and so are you, Rosette! Isnabel, you did not take sufficient room for the leap, and you, Rosette, nearly caught your dress in the posts. You might have killed yourself."

"What matter?" replied Rosette with an accent so sad and melancholy, that Isnabel forgave her for having leaped the fence as well.

They went on for some time and reached the cross-roads where they were to find huntsmen and pack. Six arches cut in the thickness of the forest led to a little stone tower with six sides, on each of which was engraved the name of the road that terminated there. The trees rose to such a height that it seemed as if they wished to card the fleecy, flaky clouds sailing over their heads before a somewhat strong breeze; close, high grass and impenetrable bushes afforded retreats and fortresses to the game, and the hunt promised to be a success. It was a genuine old-world forest, with ancient oaks more than a century old, such as are to be seen no longer now than we plant no more trees, and have not patience enough to wait until those that are planted have grown up; a hereditary forest planted by great-grandfathers for the fathers, and by the fathers for the grandsons, with avenues of prodigious breadth, an obelisk surmounted by a ball, a rockworn fountain, the indispensable pond, and white-powdered keepers in yellow leather breeches and sky-blue coats; one of those dark, bushy forests wherein stand out in admirable relief the white satiny cruppers of the great horses of Wouvermans, and the broad flags on the Dampierre horns, which Parrocelli loves to display radiant on the huntsmen's backs.

A multitude of dogs' tails, like pruning knives or hedge-bills were curled friskily in a dusty cloud. The signal was given, the dogs, which were straining hard enough at the

leash to strangle themselves were uncoupled, and the hunt began. We shall not describe very minutely the turnings and windings of the stag through the forest; we do not even know with exactitude whether it was a full grown stag, and in spite of all our researches we have not been able to ascertain, which is really distressing. Nevertheless we think that only full grown stags could have been found in such a forest, so ancient, so shady, and so lordly, and we see no reason why the animal after which the four principal characters of this illustrious romance were galloping on horses of different colours and *non passibus aequis*, should not have been one.

The stag ran like the true stag that he was, and the fifty dogs at his heels were no ordinary spur to his natural swiftness. The run was so quick that only a few rare bays were to be heard.

Théodore, being the best mounted and the best horseman followed hard on the pack with incredible eagerness. D'Albert was close behind him. Rosette and the little page Isnabel came after, separated by an interval which was increasing every minute.

The interval was soon so great as to take away all hopes of restoring an equilibrium.

"Suppose we stop for a little," said Rosette, "to give our horses breath? The hunt is going in the direction of the pond, and I know a cross-road which will take us there as soon as they."

Isnabel drew the bridle of his little mountain horse which, shaking the hanging locks of his mane over his eyes, bent his head, and began to scrape the sand with his hoofs.

This little horse formed the most perfect contrast with Rosette's: he was as black as night, the other as white as satin; he was quite shaggy and dishevelled, the other had its mane plaited with blue, and its tail curled and crisped. The second looked like a unicorn, and the first like a barbet.

The same antithetical difference was to be remarked in the masters as in the steeds. Rosette's hair was as dark as Isnabel's was fair; her eyebrows were very neatly traced

and in a very apparent manner; the page's were scarcely more vigorous than his skin and resembled the down on a peach. The colour of the one was brilliant and strong like the light of noon; the complexion of the other had the transparencies and blushings of the dawn of day.

"Suppose we try to catch up the hunt now?" said Isnabel to Rosette; "the horses have had time to take breath."

"Come along!" replied the pretty amazon, and they started off at a gallop down a rather narrow, transverse avenue which led to the pond; the two animals were abreast and took up nearly the whole breadth.

On Isnabel's side a great branch projected like an arm from a twisted and knotted tree, which seemed to be shaking its fist at the riders. The child did not see it.

"Take care!" cried Rosette, "bend down on your saddle! you will be unhorsed!"

The warning had been given too late; the branch struck Isnabel in the middle of the body. The violence of the blow made him lose his stirrup, and, as his horse continued to gallop and the branch was too strong to bend, he found himself lifted out of the saddle and fell heavily behind.

The child lay senseless from the blow. Rosette, greatly frightened, threw herself from her horse, and hastened to the page who showed no signs of life.

His cap had fallen off, and his beautiful fair hair streamed on all sides in disorder on the sand. His little open hands looked like hands of wax, so pale were they. Rosette knelt down beside him and tried to restore him. She had neither salts nor flask about her, and her perplexity was great. At last she noticed a tolerably deep rut in which the rain-water had collected and become clear: she dipped her finger into it, to the great terror of a little frog who was the naïad of this sea, and shook a few drops upon the bluish temples of the young page. He did not appear to feel them, and the waterpearls rolled along his white cheeks like a sylphid's tears along the leaf of a lily. Rosette, thinking that his clothes might distress him, unfastened his belt, undid the buttons of his tightly-fitting coat and opened his shirt that his breast might have freer play.

Rosette there saw something which to a man would have been one of the most agreeable surprises in the world, but which seemed to be very far from giving her pleasure—for her eyebrows drew close together, and her upper lip trembled slightly—namely, a very white bosom, scarcely formed as yet, but which gave admirable promise, and was already fulfilling much of it; a round, polished ivory bosom—to speak like the Ronsardizers—delicious to see, and more delicious to kiss.

"A woman!" she said, "a woman! ah! Théodore!"

Isnabel—for we shall continue to give him this name, although it was not his—began to breathe a little, and languidly raised his long eyelashes; he had not been wounded in any way, but only stunned. He soon sat up, and with Rosette's assistance was able to stand up on his feet and remount his horse, which had stopped as soon as he had felt that his rider was gone.

They proceeded at a slow pace as far as the pond, where they did in fact meet again with the rest of the hunt. Rosette, in a few words, related to Théodore what had taken place. The latter changed colour several times during Rosette's narration, and kept his horse beside Isnabel's for the remainder of the way.

They came back very early to the mansion; the day which had commenced so joyously ended rather sadly.

Rosette was pensive, and D'Albert seemed also to be plunged in deep thought. The reader will soon know what had occasioned this.

8

"I am accustomed to conceal nothing from you, neither actions nor thoughts. The most secret fibres of my heart I have laid bare before you; however whimsical, ridiculous, and eccentric the impulses of my soul may be, I must des-

cribe them to you; but, in truth, what I have experienced for some time is so strange, that I can scarcely dare to acknowledge it to myself. I told you somewhere that I feared lest, from seeking the beautiful and disquieting myself to attain it, I should at last fall into the impossible or monstrous. I have almost come to this; oh, when shall I emerge from all these currents which conflict and draw me to left and right; when will the deck of my vessel cease to tremble beneath my feet and be swept by the waves of all these storms? where shall I find a harbour where I may cast anchor, and a rock immovable and beyond the reach of the billows where I may dry myself and wring the foam from my hair.

"You know the eagerness with which I have sought for physical beauty, the importance that I attach to external form, and the love of the visible world that possesses me. I cannot be otherwise; I am too corrupted and surfeited to believe in moral beauty, and to pursue it with any consistency. I have completely lost the knowledge of good and evil, and from sheer depravity have almost returned to the ignorance of the savage or the child. In truth, nothing appears to me worthy of praise or blame, and the strangest actions astonish me but little. My conscience is deaf and dumb. Adultery appears to me the most innocent thing in the world; I deem it quite a simple matter that a young girl should prostitute herself; it seems to me that I would betray my friends without the least remorse, and that I should not have the slightest scruple about kicking people who annoyed me down a precipice if I were walking with them along the edge. I would look with coolness on the most atrocious sights, and there is something in the sufferings and misfortunes of humanity which is not displeasing to me. I experience at the sight of some calamity falling upon the world the same feeling of acrid and bitter voluptuousness that is experienced by a man who at last avenges an old affront.

"I abhor the whole world in a body, and in the whole collection I scarcely deem one or two worthy of a special hatred. To hate anyone is to disquiet yourself as much about him as though you loved him; to distinguish him, isolate him from the crowd; to be in a violent condition on account of

him; to think of him by day and dream of him by night; to bite your pillow and grind your teeth at the thought that he exists; what more could you do for one you loved? Would you bestow the same trouble and activity on pleasing a mistress as on ruining an enemy? I doubt it—in order really to hate anybody, we must love another. Every great hatred serves as a counterweight to a great love: and whom could I hate, I who love nobody?

"I have said that I love nothing; alas! I am now afraid of loving something. It were ten thousand times better to hate than so to love! I have found the type of beauty that I dreamed of so long. I have discovered the body of my phantom; I have seen it, it has spoken to me, I have touched its hand, it exists; it is not a chimera. I well knew that I could not be mistaken, and that my presentiments never lied. Yes, Silvio, I am by the side of my life's dream; its room is there and mine is here. I can see the trembling of the curtain at its window and the light of its lamp. Its shadow has just passed across the curtain. In an hour we shall sup together.

"The beautiful Turkish eyelashes, the deep and limpid gaze, the warm colour of pale amber, the long and lustrous black hair, the nose finely cut and proud, the joints and slender delicate extremities after the manner of Parmeginiano, the dainty curves, the purity of oval, which give so much elegance and aristocracy to a face, all that I wished for, and that I should have been happy to find disseminated in five or six persons, I have found united in one!

"What I most adore of all things in the world is a pretty hand. If you saw this one! what perfection! what vivacious whiteness! what softness of skin! what penetrating moisture! how admirably tapering the extremity of the fingers! how clear the oval markings on the nails! what polish and what splendour! you would compare them to the inner leaves of a rose,—the hands of Anne of Austria, so vaunted and celebrated, are in comparision but those of a turkey-herd or of a scullery-maid. And then what grace is there and what art in the slightest movements of this hand! how gracefully does this little finger curve and keep itself a little apart from its

tall brothers! The thought of this hand maddens me, and causes my lips to quiver and burn. I close my eyes that I may see it no longer; but with the tips of its delicate fingers it takes my eyelashes and opens the lids, and causes a thousand visions of ivory and snow to pass before me.

"Ah! it is Satan's claw, no doubt, that is gloved beneath this satin skin;—it is some jesting demon who is befooling me;—there is some sorcery here. It is too monstrously impossible.

"I wished to love. I went like a madman calling and invoking love; I writhed with rage beneath the feeling of my impotence; I fired my blood, and dragged my body to the sloughs of pleasure; I clasped to suffocation against my arid heart a fair young woman who loved me; I pursued the passion that fled from me. I degraded myself, and acted like a virgin going to an evil place in hope of finding a lover among those brought thither by impure motives, instead of waiting patiently in discreet and silent shadow until the angel reserved for me by God should appear to me with radiant penumbra, a flower from heaven ready to my hand. All the years that I have wasted in childish disquietude, hastening hither and thither, and trying to force nature and time, I ought to have spent in solitude and meditation, in striving to render myself worthy of being loved; that would have been wisely done; but I had scales before my eyes and I walked straight to the precipice. Already I have one foot suspended over the void, and I believe that I shall soon raise the other. My resistance is in vain, I feel it, I must roll to the bottom of the new abyss which has just opened up within me.

"Yes, it was indeed thus that I had imagined love. I now feel that of which I had dreamed. Yes, here is the charming and terrible sleeplessness in which the roses are thistles and the thistles roses; here is the sweet grief and the wretched happiness, the unspeakable trouble which surrounds you with a golden cloud and, like drunkenness, causes the shape of objects to waver before you, the buzzings in the ear wherein there ever rings the last syllable of the well-beloved's name, the paleness, the flushings,

the sudden quiverings, the burning and icy sweat: it is indeed thus; the poets do not lie.

"When I am about to enter the drawing-room in which we usually meet, my heart beats with such violence that it might be seen through my dress, and I am obliged to restrain it with both my hands lest it should escape. If I perceive this form at the end of an avenue or in the park, distance is straightway effaced, and the road passes away I know not where: the devil must carry it off or I must have wings. Nothing can divert my attention from it: I read, and the same image comes between the book and my eyes; I ride, I gallop, and I still believe that I can feel in the whirlwind its long hair mingling with mine, and hear its hurried respiration and its warm breath passing lightly over my cheek. This image possesses and pursues me everywhere, and I never see it more than when I see it not.

"You pitied me for not loving, pity me now for loving, and above all for loving whom I love. What a misfortune, what a hatchet-stroke upon my life that was already so mutilated! what senseless, guilty, odious passion has laid hold upon me! It is a shame whose blush will never fade from my brow. It is the most lamentable of all my aberrations, I cannot understand it, I cannot comprehend it at all, everything is confused and upset within me; I can no longer tell who I am or what others are, I doubt whether I am a man or a woman, I have a horror of myself, I experience strange and inexplicable emotions, and there are moments when it seems to me as if my reason were departing, and when the feeling of my existence forsakes me altogether. For a long time I could not believe what was; I listened to myself and watched myself attentively. I strove to unravel the confused skein that was entangled in my soul. At last, through all the veils which enveloped it, I discovered the frightful truth. Silvio, I love—Oh! no, I can never tell you—I love a man."

9

"WHAT I feel towards this young man is truly incredible; no woman has ever troubled me so singularly. The sound of his clear, silvery voice affects my nerves and agitates me in a strange manner; my soul hangs on his lips, like a bee on a flower, to drink in the honey of his words. I cannot brush him as I pass without quivering from head to foot, and when, in the evening, as we are separating, he gives me his soft, satin-like, adorable hand, all my life rushes to the spot that he has touched, and an hour afterwards I still feel the pressure of his fingers.

"This morning I gazed at him for a long time without his seeing me. I was concealed behind my curtain. He was at his window which is exactly opposite to mine.

"With his long hair stirred softly by the breeze, his marble neck thus uncovered, his ample robe clasped around his waist, and his beautiful hands issuing from their ruffles like the pistils of a flower from the midst of their petals, he looked not the handsomest of men but the most beautiful of women, and I said in my heart—'It is a woman, oh! it is a woman!' Then I suddenly remembered the nonsense which as you know, I wrote to you a long time ago, respecting my ideal and the manner in which I should assuredly meet with it: the beautiful lady in the Louis XIII park, the red and white mansion, the large terrace, the avenues of old chestnut trees, and the interview at the window; I once gave you all these details. It was just so,—what I saw was the exact realisation of my dream. It was just the style of architecture, the effect of light, the description of beauty, the colour and the character that I had desired;—nothing was wanting, only the lady was a man;—but I confess to you that for the moment I had completely forgotten this.

"Théodore must be a woman disguised; the thing is impossible otherwise. Such beauty, even for a woman, is not

the beauty of a man, were he Antinoüs, the friend of Adrian; were he Alexis, the friend of Virgil. It is a woman, by heaven, and I was very foolish to torment myself in such a manner. In this way everything is explained in the most natural fashion in the world, and I am not such a monster as I believed.

"Would God put those long, dark, silken fringes on the coarse eyelids of a man? Would he dye our ugly, blobber-lipped and hair-bristling mouths with carmine so delicate and bright? Our bones, hewn into shape as with blows of a hedge-bill and coarsely fitted together, are not worthy of being swaddled in such white and tender flesh; our indented skulls are not made to be bathed in floods of such wonderful hair.

"I looked like the erased and shapeless draught of the thought whereof he was the copy in fair, moulded writing. When I saw him walk, stop, salute the ladies, sit and lie down with the perfect grace which results from beauty of proportion, I was seized with sadness and frightful jealousy, such as must be felt by the clay model drying and splitting obscurely in a corner of the studio, while the haughty marble statue, which would not have existed without it, stands proudly on its sculptured socle, and attracts the attention and praises of the visitors. For the rogue is, after all, only my own self which has succeeded a little better, and been cast with less rebellious bronze, that has made its way more exactly into the hollows of the mould. I think that he has great hardihood to strut in this way with my form and to display as much insolence as though he were an original type: he is, when all is said, only a plagiarism from me, for I was born before him, and without me nature would not have conceived the idea of making him as he is.

"I consider woman after the manner of the ancients, as a beautiful slave designed for our pleasure. Christianity has not rehabilitated her in my eyes. To me she is still something dissimilar and inferior that we worship and play with a toy which is more intelligent than if it were of ivory or gold, and which gets up of itself if we let it fall. I have been told, in consequence of this that I think badly of

women; I consider, on the contrary, that it is thinking very well of them.

"I do not know, in truth, why women are so anxious to be regarded as men. I can understand a person wishing to be a boa, a lion or an elephant; but that anyone should wish to be a man is something quite beyond my comprehension. If I had been at the Council of Trent when they discussed the important question of whether a woman is a man, I should certainly have given my opinion in the negative.

"I have written some love-verses during my lifetime, or, at least, some which assumed to pass for such. I have just read a portion of them again. They are altogether wanting in th sentiment of modern love. If they were written in Latin distichs instead of in French rhymes, they might be taken for the work of a bad poet of the time of Augustus. And I am astonished that the women, for whom they were written, were not seriously angry, instead of being quite charmed with them. It is true that women know as little about poetry as cabbages and roses, which is quite natural and plain, being themselves poetry, or, at least, the best instruments for poetry: the flute does not hear nor understand the air that is played upon it.

"In these verses nothing is spoken of but golden or ebony hair, marvellous delicacy of skin, roundness of arm, smallness of foot, and shapely daintiness of hand, and the whole terminates with a humble supplication to the divinity to grant the enjoyment of all these beautiful things as speedily as possible. In the triumphant passages there is nothing but garlands hung upon the threshold, torrents of flowers, burning perfumes, Catullian addition of kisses, sleepless and charming nights, quarrels with Aurora, and injunction to the same Aurora to return and hide herself behind the saffron curtains of old Tithonus;—brightness without heat, sonorousness without vibration. They are accurate, polished, written with consistent elaboration; but through all the refinements and veils of expression you may divine the short, stern voice of the master trying to be mild while speaking to the slave. There is no soul, as in the erotic

poetry written since the Christian era, asking another soul to love it because it loves; there is no azure-tinted, smiling lake inviting a brook to pour itself into its bosom that they may reflect the stars of heaven together; there is no pair of doves spreading their wings at the same time to fly to the same nest.

"Cynthia, you are beautiful; make haste. Who knows whether you will be alive to-morrow? Your hair is blacker than the lustrous skin of an Ethiopian virgin. Make haste; a few years hence, slender silver threads will creep into its thick clusters; these roses smell sweet to-day, but to-morrow they will have the odour of death, and be but the corpses of roses. Let us inhale thy roses while they resemble thy cheeks; let us kiss thy cheeks while they resemble thy roses. When you are old, Cynthia, no one will have anything more to do with you,—not even the lictor's servants when you would pay them,—and you will run after me whom now you repulse. Wait until Saturn with his nail has scratched this pure and shining brow, and you will see how your threshold, so besieged, so entreated, so warm with tears and so decked with flowers, will be shunned, and cursed, and covered with weeds and briars. Make haste, Cynthia; the smallest wrinkle may serve as a grave for the greatest love.

"Such is the brutal and imperious formula in which all ancient elegy is contained: it always comes back to it; it is its greatest, its strongest reason, the Achilles of its arguments. After this it has scarcely anything to say, and, when it has promised a robe of twice-dyed byssus and a union of equal-sized pearls, it has reached the end of its tether. And it is also nearly the whole of what I find most conclusive in a similar emergency.

"Nevertheless I do not always abide by so scanty a programme, but embroider my barren canvas with a few differently coloured silken threads picked up here and there. But these pieces are short or are twenty times renewed, and do not keep their places well on the groundwork of the woof. I speak of love with tolerable elegance because I have read many fine things about it. It only needs the talent of an

actor to do so. With many women this appearance is enough; my habitual writing and imagination prevent me from being short of such materials, and every mind that is at all practised may easily arrive at the same result by application; but I do not feel a word of what I say, and I repeat in a whisper like the ancient poet: Cynthia, make haste.

"I have often been accused of deciet and dissimulation. Nobody in the world would be so pleased as myself to speak freely and pour forth his heart! but, as I have not an idea or a feeling similar to those of the people who surround me,—as, at the first true word that I let fall, there would be a hurrah and a general outcry, I have preferred to keep silence, or, if speaking, to discharge only such follies as are admitted and have rights of citizenship. I should be welcome if I said to the ladies what I have just written to you! I do not think that they would have any great liking for my manner of seeing and ways of looking upon love.

"Alas! the earth turns round the sun, roasted on one side and frozen on the other. A battle takes place in which six hundred thousand men cut each other to pieces; the weather is as fine as possible; the flowers display unparalleled coquetry, and impudently open their luxuriant bosoms beneath the very feet of the horses. To-day a fabulous number of good deeds have been performed; it is pouring fast, there is srow and thunder, lightning and hail; you would think that the world was comirg to an end. The benefactors of humanity are muddy to the waist and as dirty as dogs, unless they have carriages. Creation mocks pitilessly at the creature, and shouts keen sarcasms at it every minute. Everything is different to everything, and each lives or vegetates in virtue of its own law. What difference does it make to the sun, to the beetroots, or even to men, whether I do this or that, live or die, suffer or rejoice, dissemble or be sincere?

"A straw falls upon an ant and breaks its third leg at the second articulation; a rock falls upon a village and crushes it: I do not believe that one of these misfortunes draws

more tears than the other from the golden eyes of the stars. You are my best friend, if the expression is not as hollow as a bell; but were I to die, it is very evident that, mourn as you might, you would not abstain from dining for even two days, and would, in spite of such a terrible catastrophe, continue to play trick-track very pleasantly. Which of my friends or mistresses will know my name and Christian names twenty years hence, or would recognise me in the street if I were to appear with a coat out at elbows? Forgetfulness and nothingness are the whole of man.

"I feel myself as perfectly alone as is possible, and all the threads passing from me to things and from things to me have been broken one by one. There are few examples of a man who, preserving a knowledge of the movements that take place within him, has arrived at such a degree of brutishness. I am like a flagon of liqueur which has been left uncorked and whose spirit has completely evaporated. The beverage has the same appearance and colour; but taste it, and you will find in it nothing but the insipidity of water.

"Since the time of Christ there has not been a single human statue in which adolescent beauty has been idealised and represented with the care that characterises the ancient sculptors. Woman has become the symbol of moral and physical beauty: man has really fallen from the day that the infant was born at Bethlehem. Woman is the queen of creation; the stars unite in a crown upon her head, the crescent of the moon glories in waxing beneath her foot, the sun yields his purest gold to make her jewels, painters who wish to flatter the angels give them women's faces, and, certes, I shall not be the one to blame them.

"Previous to the gentle and worthy narrator of parables, it was quite the opposite; gods or heroes were not made feminine when it was wished to make them charming; they had their own type, at once vigorous and delicate, but always male, however amorous their outlines might be, and however smooth and destitute of muscles and veins the workman might have made their divine legs and arms. He was more ready to bring the special beauty of women

into accordance with this type. He enlarged the shoulders, attenuated the hips, gave more prominence to the throat, and accentuated the joints of the arms and thighs more strongly. There is scarcely any difference between Paris and Helen. And so the hermaphrodite was one of the most eagerly cherished chimeras of idolatrous antiquity.

"This son of Hermes and Aphrodite is, in fact, one of the sweetest creations of Pagan genius. Nothing in the world can be imagined more ravishing than these two bodies, harmoniously blended together and both perfect, these two beauties so equal and so different, forming but one superior to both, because they are reciprocally tempered and improved. To an exclusive worshipper of form, can there be a more delightful uncertainty than that into which you are thrown by the sight of the back, the ambiguous loins, and the strong, delicate legs, which you are doubtful whether to attribute to Mercury ready to take his flight or to Diana coming forth from the bath? The torso is a compound of the most charming monstrosities: on the bosom, which is plump and quite pubescent, swells with strange grace the breast of a young maiden; beneath the sides, which are well covered and quite feminine in their softness, you may divine the muscles and the ribs, as in the sides of a young lad; the belly is rather flat for a woman, and rather round for a man, and in the whole habit of the body there is something cloudy and undecided which it is impossible to describe, and which possesses quite a peculiar attraction. Théodore would certainly be an excellent model for this kind of beauty; nevertheless I think that the feminine portion prevails with him, and that he has preserved more of Salmacis than did the Hermaphrodite of the Metamorphoses.

"But I am not very clear as to the advantages to be derived by a young and beautiful woman from rambling about in man's clothes. A woman ought not to give up in this way the pleasure of being courted, madrigalised and worshipped; she should rather give up her life, and she would be right, for what is a woman's life without all this? Nothing, or something worse than death. And I am always

astonished that women who are thirty years old, or have the small-pox, do not throw themselves down from the top of a steeple.

"In spite of all this, something stranger than any reasoning cries to me that it is a woman, and that it is she of whom I have dreamed, she whom alone I am to love, and by whom I alone am to be loved. Yes, it was she, the goddess with eagle glance and beautiful royal hands, who used to smile with condescension upon me from the height of her throne of clouds. She has presented herself to me in this disguise to prove me, to see whether I should recognise her, whether my amorous gaze would penetrate the veils which enwrap her, as in those wondrous tales where the fairies appear at first in the forms of beggars, and then suddenly stand out resplendent with gold and precious stones.

"I have recognised thee, O my love! At the sight of thee my heart leaped within my bosom as did St. John in the womb of St. Elisabeth, when she was visited by the Virgin; a blazing light was shed through the air; I perceived, as it were, an odour of divine ambrosia; I saw the trail of fire at thy feet, and I straightway understood that thou wert not a mere mortal.

"The melodious sounds of St. Cecilia's viol, to which the angels listen with rapture, are harsh and discordant in comparison with the pearly cadences which escape from thy ruby lips: the Graces, young and smiling, dance a ceaseless roundel about thee; the birds, warbling, bend their little variegated heads to see thee better as thou passest through the woods, and pipe to thee their prettiest refrains; the amorous moon rises earlier to kiss thee with her pale silver lips, for she has forsaken her shepherd for thee; the wind is careful not to efface the delicate print of thy charming foot upon the sand; the fountain becomes smoother than crystal when thou bendest over it, fearing to wrinkle and distort the reflection of thy celestial countenence; the modest violets themselves open up their little hearts to thee and display a thousand coquetries before thee; the jealous strawberry is piqued to emulation and strives to equal the divine carnation of thy mouth; the imperceptible gnat hums joy-

ously and applauds thee with the beating of its wings: all nature loves and admires thee, who art her fairest work!

"Ah! now I live;—until this moment I was but a dead man: now I am freed from the shroud, and stretch both my wasted hands out of the grave towards the sun; my blue, ghastly colour has left me: my blood circulates swiftly through my veins. The frightful silence which reigned around me is broken at last. The black, opaque vault which weighed heavy on my brow is illumined. A thousand mysterious voices whisper in my ear; charming stars sparkle above me, and sand the windings of my path with their spangles of gold; the daisies laugh sweetly to me, and the bell-flowers murmur my name with their little restless tongues. I understand a multitude of things which I used not to understand, I discover affinities and marvellous sympathies, I know the language of the roses and nightingales and I read with fluency the book which once I could not even spell.

"Another life has become mine. I breathe with the breast of another, and a blow wounding him would kill me. Before this happy day I was like those gloomy Japanese idols which look down perpetually at their own bellies. I was a spectator of myself, the audience of the comedy that I was playing; I looked at myself living, and I listened to the oscillations of my heart as to the throbbing of a pendulum. That was all. Images were portrayed on my heedless eyes, sounds struck my inattentive ear, but nothing from the external world reached my soul. The existence of any one else was not necessary to me; I even doubted any existence other than my own, concerning which again I was scarcely sure. It seemed to me that I was alone in the midst of the universe, and that all the rest was but vapours, images, vain illusions, fleeting appearances destined to people this nothingness. What a difference!

"And yet what if my presentiment is deceiving me, and Théodore is really a man as every one believes him to be! Such marvellous beauties have sometimes been seen, and great youth assists such an illusion. It is something that I will not think of and that would drive me mad; the seed

fallen yesterday into the sterile rock of my heart has already pierced it in every direction with its thousand filaments; it has clung vigorously to it and to pluck it up would be impossible. It is already a blossoming and green-growing tree with twisting muscular roots. If I came to know with certainty that Théodore is not a woman, I do not know, alas! whether I should not still love him."

10

"My fair friend, you were quite right in dissuading me from the plan that I had formed of seeing men and studying them thoroughly before giving my heart to any among them. I have for ever extinguished love within me, and even the possibility of love.

"Poor young girls that we are, brought up with so much care, surrounded in such maidenly fashion with a triple wall of reticence and precaution, who are allowed to understand nothing, to suspect nothing, and whose principal knowledge is to know nothing, in what strange errors do we live, and what treacherous chimeras cradle us in their arms!

"Ah! Graciosa, thrice cursed be the minute when the idea of this disguise occurred to me; what horrors, infamies, brutalities have I been forced to witness or to hear! what a treasure of chaste and precious ignorance have I dissipated in but a short time!

"It was in a fair moonlight, do you remember? we were walking together, at the very bottom of the garden, in that dull, little-frequented alley, terminated at one end by a statue of a flute-playing Faun which has lost its nose, and whose whole body is covered with a thick leprosy of blackish moss, and at the other by a counterfeit view painted on the wall, and half-effaced by the rain.

"You wished to have for your lover a bold, proud young fellow, with black moustache and hair, large spurs, large

feathers, and a large sword— a sort of bully in love, and you indulged to the full in the heroic and triumphant: you dreamed of nothing but duels and escalades, and miraculous devotion, and you would have been ready to throw your glove into the lions' den that your Esplandian might follow to fetch it. It was very comical to see you, a little girl as you were then, blonde, blushing, and yielding to the faintest blast, delivering yourself of such generous tirades all in a breath, and with the most martial air in the world.

"For myself, although I was only six months older than you, I was six years less romantic: one thing chiefly disquieted me, and this was to know what men said among themselves and what they did after leaving drawing-rooms and theatres; I felt that there were many faulty and obscure sides to their lives, which were carefully veiled from our gaze, and which it was very important that we should know. Sometimes hidden behind a curtain, I would watch from a distance the gentlemen who came to the house, and it seemed to me then as if I could distinguish something base and cynical in their manner, a coarse carelessness or a wild preoccupied look, which I could no longer discern in them as soon as they had come in, and which they seemed to lay aside, as by enchantment, on the threshold of the room. All, young as well as old, appeared to me to have uniformly adopted conventional masks, conventional opinions and conventional modes of speech when in the presence of women.

"From the corner of the drawing-room, where I used to sit as straight as a doll, without leaning back in my easy-chair, I would listen and look as I rolled my bouquet between my fingers; although my eyes were cast down I could see to right and to left, before me and behind me: like the fabulous eyes of the lynx, my eyes could pierce through walls, and I could have told what was going on in the adjoining room.

"I had also perceived a noteworthy difference in the way in which they spoke to married women; they no longer used discreet, polished, and childishly embellished phrases such as were addressed to myself and my companions, but displayed bolder sprightliness, less sober and more disembar-

rassed manners, open reticence, and the ambiguity that quickly comes from a corruption which knows that it has similar corruption before it: I was quite sensible that there existed an element in common between them which did not exist between us, and I would have given anything to know what this element was.

"With what anxiety and furious curiosity I would follow with eyeand ear the laughing, buzzing groups of young men, who, after making a halt at some points in the circle, would resume their walk, talking and casting ambiguous glances as they passed. On their scornfully puffed-up lips hovered incredulous sneers; they looked as though they were scoffing at what they had just said, and were retracting the compliments and adoration with which they had overwhelmed us. I could not hear their words; but I knew from the movements of their lips that they were uttering expressions in a language with which I was unaquainted, and of which no one had ever made use in my presence.

"Generally, what was said seemed to be favourable to me, and it was not this that disquieted me: I did not care very much about being thought beautiful; it was the slight observations dropped into the hollow of the ear, and nearly always followed by long sneers and singular winkings of the eye, that is what I should have liked to hear; and I would have cheerfully abandoned the most flowery and perfumed conversation in the world to hear one of such expressions as are whispered behind a curtain or in the corner of a doorway.

"If I had had a lover I should have greatly liked to know the way in which he spoke of me to another man, and the terms in which, with a little wine in his head and both elbows on the table-cloth, he would boast of his good fortune to the companions of his orgie.

"The death of my uncle, the only relation left to me, giving me freedom of action, I put into practice what I had dreamed of for so long. My precautions were taken with the greatest care to prevent any one from suspecting my sex. I had learned how to handle a sword and fire a pistol; I rode perfectly, and with a hardihood of which few horsemen

would have been capable; I carefully studied the way to wear my cloak and make my riding-whip clack, and in a few months I succeeded in transforming a girl who was thought rather pretty into a far more pretty cavalier, who lacked scarcely anything but a moustache. I realised my property, and left the town, determined not to return without the most complete experience.

"It was the only means of clearing up my doubts; to have had lovers would have taught me nothing, or would at least have afforded me but incomplete glimpses, and I wished to study man thoroughly, to anatomise him with inexorable scalpel fibre by fibre, and to have him alive and palpitating on my dissecting table; to do this it would be necessary to see him at home, alone and undressed, and to follow him when he went out walking, and visited the tavern or other places. With my disguise I could go everywhere without being remarked; there would be no concealment before me, all reserve and constraint would be thrown aside, I would receive confidences, and would give false ones to provoke others that were true. Alas! women have read only man's romance and never his history.

"It is a frightful thing to think of, and one which is not thought of, how profoundly ignorant we are of the life and conduct of those who appear to love us, and whom we are going to marry. Their real existence is as completely unknown to us as if they were inhabitants of Saturn or of some other planet a hundred million leagues from our sublunary ball: one would think that they were of a different species, and that there is not the slightest intellectual link between the two sexes; the virtues of the one are the vices of the other, and what excites admiration for a man brings disgrace upon a woman.

"As for us, our life is clear and may be pierced at a glance. It is easy to follow us from our home to the boarding-school, and from the boarding-school to our homes; what we do is no mystery to anybody; every one may see our bad stump-drawings, our water-colour bouquets composed of a pansy and a rose as large as a cabbage, and with the stalk tastefully tied with a bright-coloured ribbon: the

slippers which we embroider for our father's or grandfather's birthday have nothing very occult and disquieting in them. Our sonatas and ballads are gone through with the most desirable coldness. We are well and duly tied to our mother's apron strings, and at nine or ten o'clock at the latest we retire into our little white beds at the end of our discreet and tidy cells, wherein we are virtuously bolted and padlocked until next morning. The most watchful and jealous susceptibility could find nothing to complain of.

"The most limpid crystal does not possess the transparency of such a life.

"The man who takes us knows what we have done from the minute we were weaned, and even before it if he likes to pursue his researches so far. Our life is not a life, it is a species of vegetation like that of mosses and flowers; the icy shadow of the maternal stem hovers over us, poor, stifled rosebuds who dare not bloom. Our chief business is to keep ourselves very straight, well laced, and well brushed, with our eyes becomingly cast down, and for immobility and stiffness to surpass manikins and puppets on springs.

"In the anxiety to prevent us from being romantic we are made idiots. The period of our education is spent not in teaching us something, but in preventing us from learning something.

"We are really prisoners in body and mind; but how could a young man, who has freedom of action, who goes out in the morning not to return until the next morning, who has money, and who can make it and spend it as he pleases, how could he justify the employment of his time? what man would tell his sweetheart all that he did day and night? Not one, even of those who are reputed the most pure.

"I had sent my horse and my garments to a little grange of mine at some distance from the town. I dressed, mounted, and rode off, not without a singular heaviness of heart. I regretted r othing, for I was leaving nothing behind, neither relations nor friends, nor dog nor cat, and yet I was sad, and almost had tears in my eyes; the farm which I had visited only five or six times had no particular interest for me, and

it was not the liking that we take for certain places and that affects us when leaving them which prompted me to turn round two or three times to see again from a distance its spiral of bluish smoke ascending amid the trees.

"There it was that I had left my title of woman with my dresses and petticoats; twenty years of my life were locked up in the room where I had made my toilet, years which were to be counted no longer, and which had ceased to concern me. 'Here lies Madelaine de Maupin' might have been written on the door, for I was, in fact, no longer Madelaine de Maupin but Théodore de Sérannes, and no one would call me any more by the sweet name of Madelaine.

"The drawer which held my henceforth useless dresses appeared to me like the coffin of my fair illusions; I was a man, or, at least, had the appearance of one: the young girl was dead.

"I struck my animal's neck smartly with my whip, which made him redouble his speed. So rapidly was I riding, that my hair was nearly straight behind my head, and my cloak was horizontal, as though its folds were sculptured in stone; once I looked behind, and I saw the dust raised by my horse's hoofs like a little white cloud far away on the horizon.

"The sun was sinking slowly beneath the horizon, like the lustre in a theatre which is turned down when the performance is over. Rabbits and peasants crossed the road from time to time; the shadows became longer, and the distance was tinted with red. Some portions of the sky were of a very sweet and softened lilac colour, others resembled the citron and orange; the night-birds began to sing, and a crowd of strange sounds issued from the wood: the little light that remained died away, and the darkness became complete, increased, as it was, by the shade cast by the trees.

"I, who had never gone out alone at night, in a large forest at eight o'clock in the evening! Can you imagine such a thing, Graciosa, I who used to be dying of fear at the end of the garden? Terror seized me more than ever, and my heart beat terribly: I confess that it was with great satisfaction that I saw the lights of the town to which I

was going, peeping and sparkling at the back of a hill. As soon as I saw those brilliant specks, like little terrestrial stars, my fright completely left me. It seemed to me as if these indifferent gleams were the open eyes of so many friends who were watching for me.

"An enormous fire-place opened its red and black jaws in the background, swallowing up a faggot at each mouthful, while at either side of the andirons two dogs, seated on their haunches and nearly as high as a man, were toasting themselves with all the phlegm in the world, contenting themselves with lifting their paws a little and heaving a sort of sigh when the heat became too intense; but they would certainly have let themselves be reduced to cinders rather than have retired a step.

"My arrival did not appear to please them; and it was in vain that I tried to become aquainted with them, by stroking their heads now and then; they cast stealthy looks at me which imported nothing good. This surprised me, for animals come readily to me.

"The inn-keeper came up and asked me what I wished for supper.

"He was a paunch-bellied man, with a red rose, wall eyes, and a smile that went round his head. At every word he uttered he displayed a double row of teeth, which were pointed and separated like an ogre's. The large kitchen-knife which hung by his side had a dubious appearance, and looked as if it might serve several purposes. When I had told him what I wanted he went up to one of the dogs and gave him a kick somewhere. The dog rose, and proceeded towards a sort of wheel which he entered with a cross and pitiful look, casting a glance of reproach at me. At last, seeing that no mercy was to be hoped for, he began to turn his wheel, and with it the spit on which the chicken for my supper was broached. I inwardly promised to throw him the remains of it for his trouble, and began to look round the kitchen until it should be ready.

"The ceiling was crossed by broad oaken joists, all blistered and blackened by the smoke from the hearth and candles. Pewter dishes brighter than silver, and white

crockery-ware, with blue nosegays on it, shone in the shade on the dressers. Along the walls were numerous files of well-scoured pans, not unlike the ancient bucklers which were hung up in a row along the Grecian or Roman triremes (forgive me, Graciosa, for the epic magnificence of this comparison). One or two big servant-girls were busy about a large table moving plates and dishes and forks, the most agreeable of all music when you are hungry, for then the hearing of the stomach becomes keener than that of the ear.

"In short, notwithstanding the money-box mouth and saw-like teeth of the inn-keeper, the inn had quite an honest and jovial look; and if the inn-keeper's smile had been a fathom longer, and his teeth three times as long and as white, still the rain was beginning to patter on the panes, and the wind to howl in such a fashion as to take away all inclination to leave, for I know nothing more lugubrious than such wailings on a dark and rainy night.

"An idea occurred to me and made me smile, and it was this,—that nobody in the world would come to look for me where I was.

"Who, indeed, would have thought that little Madelaine, instead of being in her warm bed with her alabaster night-lamp beside her, a novel under her pillow, and her maid in the adjoining room ready to hasten to her at the slightest nocturnal alarm, would be balancing herself on a rush-bottom chair at a country inn twenty leagues from her home, her booted feet resting on the andirons, and her hands swaggeringly thrust into her pockets?

"Yes, Madelinette did not remain like her companions idly resting her elbow on the edge of the balcony among the bind-weed and jessamine at the window, and watching the violet fringes on the horizon at the end of the plain, or some little rose-coloured cloud rounded by the May breeze. She did not strew lily leaves through mother-of-pearl palaces wherein to house her chimeras; she did not, like you, fair dreamers, clothe some hollow phantom with all imaginable perfections; she wished to be acquainted with men before giving herself to a man; she forsook everything, her beautiful brilliant robes of velvet and silk, her necklaces, brace-

lets, birds and flowers; she voluntarily gave up adoration, prostrate politeness, bouquets and madrigals, the pleasure of being considered more beautiful and better dressed than you, her sweet woman's name and all that she was, and departed, quite alone, like a brave girl, to learn the great science of life throughout the world.

"Several gentlemen entered the inn; the storm and darkness had prevented them from continuing their journey. They were all young, and the eldest was certainly not more than thirty. Their dress showed that they belonged to the upper classes, and without their dress the insolent ease of their manners would have readily made this understood. One or two of them had interesting faces; the others all displayed, to a greater or less degree, that species of brutal joviality and careless good-nature which men have among themselves, and which they lay aside completely when in our presence.

"If they could have suspected that the frail young man, half asleep in his chair at the corner of the fireplace, was anything but what he appeared to be, and was really a young girl, and fit for a king, as they say, they would certainly have quickly changed their tone, and you would immediately have seen them bridling up and making a display. They would have approached with many bows, their legs cambered, their elbows turned out, and a smile in their eyes, on their lips, in their nose, in their hair, and in their whole bodily appearance; they would have boned the words they made use of, and spoken to me only in velvet and satin phrases; at the least movement, on my part, they would have looked like stretching themselves over the floor after the manner of a carpet, lest the delicacy of my feet should be offended by its unevenness; all their hands would have been advanced to support me; the softest seat would have been prepared in the best place—but I looked like a pretty boy, and not like a pretty girl.

"I confess that I was almost ready to regret my petticoats when I saw what little attention they paid to me. For a minute I was quite mortified; for, from time to time, I forgot that I was wearing man's clothes, and had to think

of the fact in order to prevent myself from growing cross.

"There I was, not speaking a word, my arms folded, looking apparently with great attention at the chicken, which was assuming a more and more rosy-tinted complexion, and the unfortunate dog which I had so unluckily disturbed, and which was striving in its wheel like several devils in the same holy-water basin.

"The youngest of the set came up, and, giving me a clap on the shoulder, which, upon my word, hurt me a good deal, and drew a little involuntary cry from me, asked me whether I would not rather sup with them than quite by myself, seeing that the drinking would go on all the better for plenty of company. I replied that this was a pleasure I should not have dared to hope for, and that I should be very happy to do so. Our covers were then laid together, and we sat down to table.

"The panting dog, after snapping up an enormous porringerful of water with three laps of his tongue, went back to his post opposite the other dog, which had not stirred any more than if he had been made of porcelain, the newcomers, by Heaven's special grace, not having asked for a chicken.

"From some words which they let drop, I learned that they were repairing to the court, which was then at——, were they were to join other friends of theirs. I told them that I was a gentleman's son who was leaving the university and going to some relations in the country by the regular pupil's road, namely, the longest he could find. This made them laugh, and after some remarks about my innocent and candid looks they asked me whether I had a mistress. I replied that I did not know, and they laughed still more. The bottles followed one another with rapidity; although I was careful to leave my glass nearly always full, my head was somewhat heated, and not losing sight of my purpose, I brought the conversation round to women. This was not difficult; for, next to theology and æsthetics, they are the subject on which men are the readiest to talk when drunk.

"My companions were not precisely drunk,—they carried

their wine too well for that,—but they began to enter into moral discussions at random, and to put their elbows unceremoniously on the table. One of them had even passed his arm around the thick waist of one of the serving-women, and was nodding his head in very amorous fashion. Another swore that he would instantly burst, like a toad that had been given snuff, if Jeannette would not let him take a kiss on each of the big red apples which served her for cheeks; and Jeannette, not wishing him to burst like a toad, presented them to him with a very good grace, and did not even arrest a hand that audaciously found its way through the folds of her neckerchief into the moist valley of her bosom, which was very imperfectly guarded by a little golden cross, and it was only after a short whispered parley that he let her go and take away the dish.

"Yet they belonged to the court, and had elegant manners, and unless I had seen it, I should certainly never have thought of accusing them of such familiarities with the servants of an inn. Probably they had just left charming mistresses to whom they had sworn the finest oaths in the world. In truth, I should never have dreamed of charging my lover not to sully the lips on which I had laid my own along the cheeks of a trollop.

"The rogue appeared to take great pleasure in this kiss, neither more nor less than if he had embraced Phyllis of Ariadne. It was a big kiss, solidly and frankly applied, which left two little white marks on the wench's flaming cheek, and the trace of which she wiped away with the back of the hand that had just washed the plates and dishes. I do not believe that he ever gave so naturally tender a one to his heart's pure deity. This was apparently his own thought, for he said in an undertone, with quite a scornful movement of his elbow—

" 'To the devil with lean women and lofty sentiments!'

"This moral appeared to suit the company, and they all wagged their heads in token of assent.

" 'Upon my word,' said the other, following out his idea, 'I am unfortunate in everything. Gentlemen, I must confide to you under the seal of the greatest secrecy, that I, I who

am speaking to you, have at this moment a flame.

" 'Oh! oh!' said the other, 'a flame! That is lugubrious to the last degree. And what do you do with a flame?'

" 'She is a virtuous woman, gentlemen;' you must not laugh, gentlemen; for, after all, why should I not have a virtuous woman? Have I said anything ridiculous. Here! you over there! I will throw the house at your head if you are not quiet.'

" 'Well! what next?'

" 'She is mad about me. She has the most beautiful soul in the world; in point of souls, I understand them,—I understand them at least as well as I do horses, and I assure you that it is a soul of the first quality. There are elevations, ecstasies, devotions, sacrifices, refinements of tenderness, everything you can think of that is most transcendent; but she has scarcely any bosom, she has none at all, even, like a little girl of fifteen at most. She is otherwise pretty enough; her hand is delicate, and her foot small; she has too much mind and not enough flesh, and I often think of leaving her in the lurch. The devil! One can't be content with minds. I am very unfortunate; pity me, my dear friends.' And, affected by the wine that he had drunk, he began to weep bitterly.

" 'Jeannette will console you for the misfortune of going to bed with sylphids,' said his neighbour, pouring him out a bumper; 'her soul is so thick that you might make bodies of it for other people, and she has flesh enough to clothe the carcasses of three elephants.'

"The conversation lasted some time longer, and was the maddest and most shameless in the world; but through all the facetious exaggeration and the often filthy jests, there was apparent a deep and genuine feeling of perfect contempt for women, and I learned more during that evening than by reading twenty cart-loads of moralists.

"The monstrous and unheard-of things that I was listening to imparted a tinge of sadness and severity to my face, which the rest of the guests perceived, and about which they teased me good-naturedly, but my gaiety could not return. I had, indeed, suspected that men were not such as

they appear to us, but yet I did not think that they were so different from their masks, and my disgust was not greater than my surprise.

"It should require only half an hour of such conversation to cure a romantic young girl for ever; it would do her more good than any maternal remonstrances.

"Some boasted of gaining as many women as they pleased, and that to do so cost them only a word; others communicated recipes for procuring mistresses, or enlarged upon the tactics to be pursued when laying siege to virtue; others again ridiculed the women whose lovers they were, and proclaimed themselves the most arrant fools on earth to be attached, in this way, to such trulls. They all made light of love.

"These, then, are the thoughts which they conceal from us beneath all their fair appearances! Who would ever think it, to see them so humble, so cringing, so ready to do anything? Ah! how hardily they raise their heads after their conquest, and insolently set the heel of their boot on the brow which they used to worship at a distance on their knees! what vengeance they take for their passing abasement! how dearly must their politeness be paid for! and through what many insults they repose after the madrigals they made! What mad brutality of language and thought! what inelegance of manners and deportment! It is a complete change, and one which certainly is not to their advantage. However far my previsions might reach, they fell far short of the reality.

"Supper came to an end at last, and we contemplated going to bed; but, as the number of sleepers was double that of the beds, it naturally followed that we must go to bed in turn or else two together. It was a very simple matter for the rest of the company, but not so by any means for me, taking into account certain protuberances which were disguised conveniently enough beneath vest and doublet, but which a simple shirt would have betrayed in all their damnable roundness; and I was certainly little disposed to disclose my incognito in favour of any of these gentlemen who at that moment appeared to me veritable and ingenuous

monsters, though I afterwards found them very decent fellows, and worth at least as much as any of their species.

"He with whom I was to share a bed was fairly drunk. He threw himself on the mattress, with one leg and arm hanging to the ground, and at once went to sleep, not the sleep of the just, but a sleep so profound that if the angel of the last judgment had come and blown his clarion in his ear he would have failed to wake him. Such a sleep greatly simplified the difficulty; I took off nothing but my doublet and boots, strode over the sleeper's body, and stretched myself on the sheets at the edge of the bed.

"I was careful to keep my distance. It was not a bad beginning! I confess that, in spite of my assurance, I was singularly troubled. The situation was so strange, so novel, that I could scarcely admit that it was not a dream. The other slept his best, but I could not close an eye the whole night.

"He was a young man, about twenty-four years of age, with rather a handsome face, dark eyelashes, and a nearly blonde moustache; his long hair rolled around his head like the waves from the inverted urn of a river-god, a light blush passed beneath his pale cheeks like a cloud beneath the water, his lips were half open and smiling with a vague and languid smile.

"I raised myself upon my elbow, and remained a long time watching him by the flickering light of a candle, of which the tallow had nearly all run down in broad sheets, and the wick was laden with black wasters.

"We were separated by a considerable interval. He occupied one extreme edge of the bed, while I, as an additional precaution, had thrown myself quite on the other.

"What I had heard was assuredly not of a nature to predispose me to tenderness and voluptuousness: I held men in abomination. Nevertheless I was more disquieted and agitated than I ought to have been; my body did not share in the repugnance of my mind so completely as it should have done. My heart was beating violently, I was hot, and on whatever side I turned I could not find repose.

"The most profound silence reigned in the inn; you could

only hear at wide intervals the dull noise caused by the hoof of some horse striking the stone-floor in the stable, or the sound of a drop of water falling upon the ashes through the shaft of the chimney. The candle, reaching the end of the wick, went out in smoke.

"The densest darkness fell like a curtain between us. You cannot conceive the effect which the sudden disappearance of the light had upon me. It seemed to me as if all were ended, and I were never more to see clearly in my life. For a moment I wished to get up; but what could I have done? It was only two o'clock in the morning, all the lights were out, and I could not wander about like a phantom in a strange house. I was obliged to remain where I was and wait for daylight.

"There I was on my back, with both hands crossed, striving to think of something, and always coming back to this: that a man was lying near me. At one moment I went so far as to wish that he would awake and perceive that I was a woman. No doubt the wine that I had drunk, though sparingly, had something to do with this extraordinary idea, but I could not help recurring to it. I was on the point of stretching out my hand towards him, to wake him up, but a fold in the bed-clothes which checked my arm prevented me from going through with it. Time was thus given me for reflection, and while I was freeing my arm, my senses, which I had altogether lost, came back to me, not entirely, perhaps, but sufficiently to restrain me.

"How curious it would have been, if I, scornful beauty as I was, I who wished to be acquainted with ten years of a man's life before giving him my hand to kiss, had surrendered myself on a pallet in an inn to the first comer! and upon my word such a thing might have happened.

"Can a sudden effervescence, a boiling of the blood, so completely subdue the most superb resolves? Does the voice of the body speak in higher tones than the voice of the mind? Whenever my pride sends too many puffs heavenwards, I bring the recollection of that night before its eyes to recall it to earth. I am beginning to be of man's opinion: what a poor thing is woman's virtue! on what, good heavens, does it

depend!

"Ah! it is vain to seek to spread one's wings, they are laden with too much clay; the body is an anchor which holds back the soul to earth: fruitlessly does she open her sails to the wind of the loftiest ideas, the vessel remains motionless, as though all the remoras of the ocean were clinging to the keel. Nature takes pleasure in such sarcasms at our expense. When she sees a thought standing on its pride as on a lofty column, and nearly touching heaven with its head, she whispers to the red fluid to quicken its pace and crowd at the gates of the arteries; she commands the temples to sing and the ears to tingle, and, behold, giddiness seizes the proud idea. All images are blended and confused, the earth seems to undulate like the deck of a bark in a storm, the heavens turn round, and the stars dance a saraband; the lips which used to utter only austere maxims are wrinkled and put forward as though for kisses; the arms so firm to repel grow soft, and become more supple and entwining than scarves. Add to this contact with an epidermis and a breath across your hair, and all is lost.

"Often even less is sufficient. A fragrance of foliage coming to you from the fields through your half-opened window the sight of two birds billing each other, an opening daisy, an old love-song which returns to you in your own despite and which you repeat without understanding its meaning, a warm wind which troubles and intoxicates you, the softness of your bed or divan—one of these circumstances is sufficient; even the solitude of your room makes you think that it would be comfortable for two, and that no more charming nest could be found for a brood of pleasures. The drawn curtains, the twilight, the silence, all bring back to you the fatal idea which brushes you with its dove-like wings and coos so sweetly about you. The tissues which touch you seem to caress you, and cling with amorous folds along your body. Then the young girl opens her arms to the first wooer with whom she finds herself alone: the philosopher leaves his page unfinished, and, with his head in his mantle, runs in all haste to assuage his passion.

"I certainly did not love the man who was causing me

such strange perturbations. He had no other charm than that he was not a woman, and, in the condition in which I found myself, this was enough! A man! that mysterious thing which is concealed from us with so much care, that strange animal, of whose history we know so little, that demon or god who alone can realise all the dreams of vague voluptuousness wherewith the spring-time flatters our sleep, the sole thought that we have from fifteen years of age!

"A man! The confused notion of pleasure floated through my dulled head. The little that I knew of it kindled my desire still more. A burning curiosity urged me to clear up once for all the doubts which perplexed me, and were for ever recurring to my mind. The solution of the problem was over the leaf: it was only necessary to turn it, the book was beside me. A handsome cavalier, a narrow bed, a dark night!—a young girl with a few glasses of champagne in her head! what a suspicious combination! Well! the result of it all was but a very virtuous nothingness.

"On the wall, upon which I kept my eyes fixed, I began, in the diminishing darkness, to distinguish the position of the window, the panes less opaque, and the grey light of dawn, glancing behind them, restored their transparency; the sky brightened by degrees: it was day. You cannot imagine the pleasure given me by that pale ray of light on the green dye of the Aumale serge which surrounded the glorious battlefield whereon my virtue had triumphed over my desires! It seemed to me as though it were my crown of victory.

"As to my companion, he had fallen out on to the ground.

"I got up, adjusted my dress as quickly as possible, and ran to the window; I opened it, and the morning breeze did me good. I placed myself before the looking-glass in order to comb my hair, and was astonished at the paleness of my countenance, which I had believed to be purple.

"The others came in to see whether we were still asleep, and pushed their friend with their feet, who did not appear much surprised at finding himself where he was.

"The horses were saddled, and we set out again.

"But this is enough for to-day. My pen will not write any

more, and I do not want to mend it; another time I will tell you the rest of my adventures; meanwhile, love me as I love you, well-named Graciosa, and do not, from what I have just told you, form too bad an opinion of my virtue."

11

"The world will have none of me; it repulses me as a spectre escaped from the tombs, and I am nearly as pale as one. My blood refuses to believe that I am alive, and will not colour my skin ; it creeps slowly through my veins like stagnant water in obstructed canals. My heart beats for nothing which causes the heart of man to beat. My griefs and joys are not those of my fellow-creatures. I have vehemently desired what nobody desires; I have scorned things which are madly longed for. I have loved women when they did not love me, and I have been loved when I would fain have been hated. Always too soon or too late, more or less, on this side or on that; never what ought to have been; either I have not arrived, or I have been too far. I have flung my life through the windows, or concentrated it upon a single point, and from the restless activity of the ardelio I have come to the dull somnolence of the teriaki and the stylite on his column.

"What I do has always the appearance of a dream; my actions seem to be the result rather of somnambulism than of a free-will; there is something within me which I feel vaguely at a great depth, and which causes me to act without my own participation and always independently of general laws ; the simple and natural side of things is never revealed to me until after all the others, and at first I always fasten upon what is eccentric and odd. However slightly the line may slant I soon make it into a spiral more twisted than a serpent; outlines, if they are not fixed in the most precise manner, become confused

and distorted. Faces assume a supernatural air, and look at you with frightful eyes.

"Thus, by a species of instinctive reaction, I have always clung desperately to matter, to the external silhouette of things, and in art have always given a very important place to the plastic. I understand a statue perfectly, while I cannot understand a man; where life begins, I stop and shrink back affrighted, as though I had seen Medusa's head. The phenomenon of life causes me an astonishment which I cannot overcome. No doubt I shall make an excellent dead man, for I am a very poor living one, and the sense of my existence completely escapes me. The sound of my voice surprises me to an unimaginable degree, and I might be tempted sometimes to take it for the voice of another. When I wish to stretch forth my arm, and my arm obeys me, the fact seems quite a prodigious one to me, and I sink into profoundest stupefaction.

"On the other hand, Silvio, I have a perfect comprehension of the unintelligible; the most extravagant notions seem quite natural to me, and I enter into them with singular facility. I can find with ease the connection of the most capricious and disordered nightmare. This is the reason why the kind of pieces I have just spoken to you about pleases me beyond all hopes.

"We have great discussions on this subject with Théodore and Rosette. Rosette has little liking for my system, she is for the *true* truth; Théodore gives more latitude to the poet, and admits a conventional and optical truth; for my part I maintain that the author must have a clear stage and that fancy should reign supreme.

"Many of the company grounded their arguments chiefly on the fact that such pieces were, as a general rule, independent of theatrical conditions and could not be performed; I replied that this was true in one sense and false in another, like nearly everything that is said, and that the ideas entertained respecting scenic possibilities and impossibilities appeared to me to be wanting in exactness, and to be the result rather of prejudices than of reason. Among other things, I said that the piece 'As

You Like It' was assuredly most presentable, especially, for people in society who were not practised in other parts.

"This suggested the idea of performing it. The season is advancing, and we have exhausted every description of amusement; we are tired of hunting, and of parties on horseback, or on the water; the chances of boston, varied as they are, have not piquancy enough to fill up an evening, and the proposal was received with universal enthusiasm.

"A young man who knew how to paint volunteered to make the scenery; he is working at it now with much ardour, and in a few days it will be finished. The stage is erected in the orangery, which is the largest hall in the mansion, and I think that everything will turn out well. I am taking the part of Orlando, and Rosette was to have played Rosalind,—which was a most proper arrangement. As my mistress, and the mistress of the house, the part fell to her of right; but owing to a caprice singular enough in her, prudery not being one of her faults, she would not disguise herself as a man. Had I not been sure of the contrary, I should have believed that her legs were badly shaped. Actually none of the ladies of the party would show herself less scrupulous than Rosette, and this nearly caused the failure of the piece; but Théodore, who had taken the part of the melancholy Jaques, offered to replace her, seeing that Rosalind is a cavalier nearly the whole time, except in the first act where she is a woman and that with paint, corset, and dress, he will be able to effect the illusion sufficiently well having as yet no beard, and being of a very slight figure.

"We are engaged in learning our parts, and it is something curious to see us. In every solitary nook in the park you are sure to find some one, paper in hand, muttering phrases in a whisper, raising his eyes to heaven, suddenly casting them down, and repeating the same gesture seven or eight times. If it were not known that we are to perform a comedy, we should assuredly be taken for a houseful of lunatics or poets (which is almost a pleonasm).

"I think that we shall soon know enough to have a rehearsal. I am expecting something very singular. Perhaps

I am wrong. I was afraid for a moment that instead of playing by inspiration our actors would endeavour to reproduce the attitudes and voice-inflections of some fashionable performer; but fortunately they have not watched the stage with sufficient accuracy to fall into this inconvenience, and it is to be expected that, through the awkwardness of people who have never trod the boards, they will display precious flashes of nature and that charming ingenuousness which the most consummate talent cannot reproduce.

"Our young painter has truly wrought wonders. It would be impossible to give a stranger shape to the old trunks of trees and the ivy which entwines them; he has taken pattern by those in the park, accentuating and exaggerating them as necessary for the stage. Everything is expressed with admirable boldness and caprice; stones, rocks, clouds, are of a mystoriously grimacing form; mirror-like reflections play on the trembling waters which are less stable than quicksilver, and the ordinary coldness of the foliage is marvellously relieved by saffron tints dashed in by the brush of autumn; the forest varies from emeralds green to cornelian purple; the warmest and the freshest tones show harmoniously together, and the sky itself passes from the softest blue to the most burning colours.

"He has designed all the costumes after my instructions, and they are of the handsomest description. At first the performers cried that they could not be produced in silk or velvet nor in any known material, and I nearly saw the moment when troubadour costume was to be generally adopted. The ladies said that such glaring colours would eclipse their eyes. To which we replied that their eyes were stars which were perfectly inextinguishable, and that on the contrary it was their eyes that would eclipse the colours, and even, if need were, the Argand lamps, the lustre, and the sun. They had no reply to this; but there were other objections which kept springing up in a bristling crowd like the Lernean hydra; no sooner was the head of one cut off than another more obstinate and more stupid would arise.

" 'How do you think this will keep together?'—'It is all very well on paper, but it is another matter when on one's back; I shall never be able to get into that!'—'My petticoat is at least four finger-lengths too short; I shall never dare to show myself in that disguise!'—'This ruff is too high; I look as if I were a hunchback and had no neck.'—'This headdress makes me look intolerably old.'

" 'With starch, pins and good-will, everything will hold.' —'You are joking! a waist like yours, more frail than a wasp's, and one which would go through the ring of my little finger! I will wager twenty-five louis to a kiss that it will be necessary to take in this bodice!'—'Your petticoat is very far from being too short, and if you knew what an adorable leg you have, you would most certainly be of my opinion.'—'On the contrary, your neck stands out and is admirably set off by its aureola of lace.'—'This headdress does not make you look old in the least, and, even if you appeared to be a few years older, you are so extremely young that this ought to be a matter of perfect indifference to you; indeed, you would give us grounds for strange suspicions if we did not know where the pieces of your last doll are'—etc.

"You cannot imagine what a prodigious quantity of madrigals we were obliged to dispense in order to compel our ladies to put on charming costumes which were most becoming to them.

"We found it equally troublesome to induce them to place their patches in an appropriate manner. What a devil of a taste women have! and what Titanic obstinacy possesses a vapourish, foppish woman who believes that glazed straw-yellow suits her better than jonquil or bright rose-colour. I am sure that if I had devoted to public affairs half the artifices and intrigues that I have employed in order to have a red feather placed on the left and not on the right, I should be a minister of state or emperor at the least.

"What a pandemonium! what an enormous and inextricable rout must a real theatre be!

"From the time that the performance of a comedy was first spoken of, everything here has been in the most com-

plete disorder. All the drawers are opened, all the wardrobes emptied; it is genuine pillage. Tables, easy-chairs, consoles, everything is littered, and a person does not know where to set his foot. Trailing about the house are prodigious quantities of dresses, mantelets, veils, petticoats, cloaks, caps, and hats; and when you think that all these are to be arranged on the bodies of seven or eight persons, you involuntarily think of those mountebanks at the fair who wear eight or ten coats one over another, and you find it impossible to conceive that the whole of this heap will only furnish one costume for each.

"The servants are constantly coming and going; there are always two or three on the road from the mansion to the town, and if this continues all the horses will become broken-winded.

"A theatrical manager has no time to be melancholy, and I have seldom been so far some time past. I am so deafened and overwhelmed that I am beginning to lose all understanding of the piece. As I support the character of impresario as well as that of Orlando, my task is a twofold one. When any difficulty arises recourse is had to me, and as my decisions are not always listened to as oracles, they degenerate into interminable discussions.

"If what is called living is to be always on one's legs, to be equal to twenty persons, to go up and down stairs and not to think for a minute during the day, I have never lived so much as during this week. Nevertheless, I have a smaller share in this animation than might be believed. The agitation is very shallow, and the stagnant, unflowing water might be found a few fathoms below; life does not penetrate me so readily as that, and my vitality is even the smallest when I seem to be working and engaging in what is going on. Action dulls and fatigues me to an extent which is inconceivable; when I am not employed actively, I think or at least dream, and this is a sort of existence, but I lose it as soon as I emerge from my porcelain-image repose.

"Up to the present I have done nothing, and I do not know whether I shall ever do anything. I cannot check my brain, which is all the difference between a man of talent

and a man of genius; it is an endless boiling, wave urging wave; I cannot master this species of internal jet which rises from my heart to my head, and, for want of outlets, drowns all my thoughts. I can produce nothing, owing not to sterility, but to superabundance; my ideas spring up so thickset and close that they are stifled and cannot ripen. Never will execution, however rapid and impetuous it may be, attain to such velocity. When I write a phrase, the thought which it represents is already as far distant from me as though a century had elapsed instead of a second, and it often happens that in spite of myself I mingle with it something of the thought which has taken its place in my head.

"This is why I cannot live, whether as a poet or as a lover. I can only give out the ideas which have left me; I have women only when I have forgotten them, and am loving others;—a man, how can I bring forth my wish to the light since, hasten as I may, I lose the consciousness of what I do, and act only in accordance with a feeble reminiscence?

"The rehearsal took place to-day. I was never so confused in my life, not owing to the embarrassment inseparable from reciting anything before so many people, but from another cause. We were in costume and ready to begin, Théodore alone had not yet arrived. A message was sent to his room to know what was keeping him; he replied that he was just ready and was coming down.

"He came in fact. I heard his step in the corridor long before he appeared, and yet no one in the world has a lighter step than Théodore; but the sympathy which I feel with him is so powerful that I can in a measure divine his movements through the walls, and, when I knew that he was about to lay his hand on the handle of the door, I was seized with a kind of trembling, and my heart beat with horrible violence. It seemed to me that something of importance in my life was about to be decided, and that I had reached a solemn and long-expected moment.

"The door opened slowly and closed in the same way.

"There was a general cry of admiration. The men ap-

plauded, and the women grew scarlet. Rosette alone became extremely pale and leaned against the wall, as though a sudden revelation were passing through her brain. She made in a contrary direction, the same movement as I did. I always suspected her of loving Théodore.

"No doubt she at that moment believed as I did that the pretended Rosalind was really nothing less than a young and beautiful woman, and the frail card-castle of her hope all at once gave way, while mine rose upon its ruins; at least this is what I thought; I may, perhaps, be mistaken, for I was scarcely in a condition to make accurate observations.

"There were three or four pretty women present, without counting Rosette; they appeared to be revoltingly ugly. By the side of this sun the star of their beauty was suddenly eclipsed, and everyone was asking how it had been possible to think them even passable. Men who previously would have esteemed themselves most fortunate to have them as mistresses, would scarcely have been willing to take them as servants.

"The image which, till then, had shown itself only feebly and with vague outlines, the phantom that I had worshipped and vainly pursued was there before my eyes, living palpable, no longer in twilight and vapour, but bathed in floods of white light; not in a vain disguise, but in its real costume; no longer in the derisive form of a young man, but with the features of the most charming woman.

"I experienced a sensation of enormous comfort, as though a mountain or two had been lifted off my breast. I felt my self-horror vanishing, and was released from the pain of regarding myself as a monster. I came again to conceive quite a pastoral opinion of myself, and all the violets of spring bloomed once more in my heart.

"He, or rather she (for I wish henceforth to forget that I had the stupidity to take her for a man) remained motionless for a minute on the threshold of the room, as though to give the gathering time to utter its first exclamation. A bright ray lit her up from head to foot, and on the dark back-ground of the corridor which receded far into the distance behind, the carved door case serving her as a

frame, she shone as though the light had emanated from her instead of being merely reflected, and she might rather have been taken for a marvellous production of the brush than for a human creature made of flesh and bone.

"Her long, brown hair, intermingled with strings of great pearls, fell in natural ringlets along her lovely cheeks! her shoulders and breast were uncovered, and I had never seen any in the world so beautiful; the sublimest marble cannot come near to such exquisite perfection. To see the life coursing beneath the clouded transparency! how white and yet so ruddy the flesh! how happily the harmonious golden tints effect the transition from skin to hair! what entrancing poems in the soft undulations of these outlines, more supple and velvety than the neck of a swan! Were there words to express what I feel I would give you a description fifty pages long; but languages were made by some scoundrels or other who had never gazed attentively on a woman's back or bosom, and we do not possess half of the most indispensable terms.

"Her dress was made of a stuff of varying colour, azure in the light, and golden in the shade; a well and close fitting boot was on a foot which, apart from this, was excessively small, and stockings of scarlet silk wound amorously round a most shapely and enticing leg; her arms which were bare to the elbows and emerged from a cluster of lace, were round, plump, and white, as splendid as polished silver, and with unimaginably delicate lineaments; her hands, which were laden with jewellery, were softly swaying a large fan of singularly variegated feathers, which looked like a little pocket rainbow.

"She advanced into the room, her cheeks slightly kindled with a red which was not paint, and everyone was in raptures, crying out and asking whether it was really possible that it could be he, Théodore de Sérannes, the daring rider, the demon duellist, the determined hunter, and whether he was perfectly sure that it was not his twin sister.

"But you would think that he had never worn any other costume in his life! His movements are not in the least embarrassed; he walks very well, and does not get entangled

in his train; he ogles and flirts with his fan in a ravishing manner! and his waist is so slender! you might enclose it with your fingers! It is extraordinary, inconceivable! The illusion is as complete as it can be: you would almost think that he had a bosom, his breast is so developed and well filled, and then not a hair on his face, not a single one; and his voice so sweet! Oh! the beautiful Rosalind! and who would not wish to be her Orlando?

"Yes, who would not wish to be the Orlando of such a Rosalind, even at the cost of the torments I have suffered?

"The deepest discouragement had taken possession of me; I looked upon myself with horror, mingled with surprise and curiosity. What was most revolting to me was the thought that I had never loved before, and that this was my first effervescence of youth, the first Easter-daisy in the spring-tide of my love.

"The rehearsal was much better than I had hoped for; Théodore especially proved admirable, it was also considered that I acted uncommonly well. This, however, was not because I possess the qualities necesaray to make a good actor, and it would be a great mistake to suppose me capable of taking other parts in the same fashion; but, through rather a singular chance, the words which I had to utter agreed with my situation so well, that they seemed to me to have been invented by myself rather than learnt by heart from a book. Had my memory failed me at certain passages, I should certainly not have hesitated for a minute before supplying the void with an improvised phrase. Orlando was I, at least, as much as I was Orlando; it would be impossible to meet with a more wonderful coincidence.

"In the wrestling scene, when Théodore unfastened the chain from his neck and presented it to me, in accordance with his part, he cast upon me so sweetly languorous and promising a look, and uttered the sentence:

'Gentleman,
Wear this for me, one out of suits with fortune
That could give more but that her hand lacks means.'

with such grace and nobility, that I was really troubled by it and could scarcely go on:

'What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue
I cannot speak to her, yet she urged conference.
O poor Orlando!'

"In the third act Rosalind, dressed like a man and under the name of Ganymede, reappears with her cousin, Celia, who has changed her name to Aliena.

"This made a disagreeable impression upon me. I had already become so well accustomed to the feminine costume which indulged my desires with some hopes, and kept me in a perfidious but seducing error! We very soon come to look upon our wishes as realities on the testimony of the most fleeting appearances, and I became quite gloomy when Théodore reappeared in his man's dress, more gloomy than I had been before; for joy only serves to make us feel grief more keenly; the sun strives only to give us a better understanding of the horror of darkness, and the gaiety of white is only intended to give relief to all the sadness of black.

"I might have led the happiest life in the world, treading on the pug-dog's tail without its mistress making too great an outcry, upsetting tables laden with china, and eating the choicest morsel at table without leaving any for the rest of the party. All this would have been excused out of consideration for the well-known absent-mindedness of lovers; and as they saw me swallowing up everything with a wild look, everyone would have clasped his hands and said, 'Poor fellow!'

"And then the dreamy, doleful air, the dishevelled hair, the untidy stockings, the slack cravat, the great hanging arms that I should have had! how I should have hastened through the avenues in the park, now swiftly, now slowly, after the fashion of a man whose reason is completely gone! How I should have stared at the moon and made rings in the water with profound tranquillity!

"But the gods have ordained it otherwise.

"I am smitten with a beauty in doublet and boots, with a proud Bradamant who scorns the garments of her sex, and leaves you at times wavering amid the most disquieting perplexities; her features and body are indeed the features and body of a woman, but her mind is unquestionably that of a

man.

"My mistress is most proficient with the sword, and might teach the most experienced fencing master's assistant; she has had I do not know how many duels, and has killed or wounded three or four persons; she clears ditches ten feet wide on horseback, and hunts like an old country squire—singular qualities for a mistress! such things never happen except with me.

"I laugh, but I have certainly no cause for doing so, for I never suffered so much, and the last two months seemed to me like two years or rather two centuries. There was an ebb and flow of uncertainties in my head sufficient to stupefy the strongest brain; I was so violently agitated and pulled in all directions, I had such furious transports, such dull atonies, such extravagant hopes and such deep despairs, that I really do not know how it was that I did not die from the pain of it. This idea so occupied and possessed me that I was astonished that it was not seen clearly through my body like a candle in a lantern, and I was in mortal terror lest someone should chance to discover the object of my insane love.

"However, Rosette, being the person most interested in watching the movements of my heart, appeared to perceive nothing; I believe that she was too much engaged in loving Théodore to pay attention to my cooling towards her; otherwise I must be a master of the art of dissimulation, and I am not so conceited as to have this belief. Théodore himself up to that day never showed that he had the faintest suspicion of the condition of my soul, and always spoke to me in a familiar and friendly fashion, as a well-bred young fellow speaks to another of his own age—nothing more. His conversation with me used to turn on all sorts of subjects, arts, poetry, and other similar matters, but never on anything of an intimate and exact nature having reference to himself or to me.

"It may be that the motives compelling him to this disguise have ceased to exist, and that he will soon resume the dress that is suitable for him. This I do not know; the fact remains that Rosalind uttered certain words with peculiar

inflexions, and in a very marked manner emphasized all the passages in her part which had an ambiguous meaning and might point in a particular direction.

"Nevertheless, I have only a moral certainty; I am without proofs, and I cannot remain any longer in this state of uncertainty; I really must speak to Théodore in a more definite manner. I have gone up to him twenty times with a sentence prepared, and could not manage to utter it. I dare not; I have many opportunities of speaking to him alone, either in the park or in my room, or in his own, for he visits me, and I him, but I let them slip without availing myself of them, although the next moment I feel mortal regret, and fall into horrible passions with myself. I open my mouth, and, in spite of myself, other words take the place of those that I would utter; instead of declaring my love, I enlarge upon the rain or the fine weather, or some other similar stupidity. Yet the season is drawing to a close, and we shall soon return to town; the facilities which here are opened up favourably to my desires will never be met with again. We shall perhaps lose sight of each other, and opposite currents will no doubt carry us away.

"As I went along I thought that with me too autumn was come and the radiant summer vanished never to return; the tree of my soul was perhaps stripped even barer than the trees of the forests; only, on the loftiest bough a single green little leaf remained, swaying, and quivering, and full of sadness to see its sisters leave it one by one.

"Remain on the tree, O little leaf the colour of hope, cling to the bough with all the strength of thy ribs and fibres; let not thyself be dismayed by the whistlings of the wind, O good little leaf! for, when thou art gone, who will mark whether I will be a dead or a living tree, and who will restrain the woodman that he cut not my foot with blows of his axe nor make faggots of my boughs? It is not yet the time when trees are bare of leaves, and the sun may yet rid himself of the misty swaddling-clothes which are about him.

"This sight of the dying season impressed me greatly. I thought that time was flying fast, and that I might die without clasping my ideal to my heart.

"As I returned home I formed a resolution. Since I could not make up my mind to speak, I wrote all my destiny on a sheet of paper. Perhaps it is ridiculous to write to some one living in the same house with you, and whom you may see any day at any hour; but I am no longer one to consider what is ridiculous or not.

"I sealed my letter not without trembling and changing colour; then, choosing a time when Théodore was out, I placed it on the middle of his table, and fled with as much agitation as though I had performed the most abominable action in the world."

12

"I left you, I think, at the departure from the inn where I had passed such a comical night, and where my virtue was nearly making shipwreck as it was leaving the harbour. We all set out together, going in the same direction. My companions were in the greatest raptures over the beauty of my horse, which is, in fact, a thorough bred, and one of the best coursers in existence; this raised me at last half a cubit in their estimation, and they added all my mount's deserts to my own. Nevertheless, they seemed to fear that it was too frisky and spirited for me. I bade them calm their fears, and to show them that there was no danger, made it curvet several times; then I cleared rather a high fence, and set off at a gallop.

"The band tried in vain to follow me; I turned bridle when I was far enough away, and returned at full speed to meet them; when I was close to them I checked my horse as he was launched out on his four feet and stopped him short, which, as you know, or, as you do not know, is a genuine feat of strength.

"I had not laid aside my pride with my clothes: being no longer a woman, I wished to be in every respect a man, and

not to be satisfied with having merely the external appearance of one. I had made up my mind to have as a gentleman the success to which, in the character of a woman, I could no longer pretend. What I was most anxious about was to know how I should proceed in order to possess courage; for courage and skill in bodily exercises are the means by which men find it easiest to establish their reputation. It is not that I am timid for a woman, and I am devoid of the idiotic pusillanimity to be seen in many; but from this to the fierce and heedless brutality which is the glory of men there still remains a wide interval, and my intention was to become a little fire-eater, a hector like men of fashion, so that I might be on a good footing in society and enjoy all the advantages of my metamorphosis.

"But the course of events showed me that nothing was easier, and that the recipe for it was very simple.

"One of the gentlemen, the sharer of my bed, he whom I had nearly pulled by the sleeve in that memorable night the agonies of which I have described to you at length, conceived a great passion for me, and kept his horse by the side of mine the whole time.

"Except that I would not have accepted him for a lover though he brought me the fairest crown in the world, he was not at all displeasing; he was well-informed, and was not without wit and good-humour: only, when he spoke of women, he did so with an air of contempt and irony, for which I would most willingly have torn both his eyes out of his head, and this the more because, for all its exaggeration there was a great deal in what he said that was cruelly true, and the justice of which my man's attire compelled me to admit.

"He invited me so pressingly and so often to go with him on a visit to one of his sisters, whose widowhood was nearly over, and who was then living at an old mansion with one of his aunts, that I could not refuse him. I made a few objections for form's sake, for in reality I was as ready to go there as anywhere else, and I could attain my end as well in this fashion as in another; and, as he assured me that he would feel quite offended if I did not give him at least a

fortnight, I replied that I was willing, and that the matter was settled.

"After a few hours' travelling we reached our destination.

"A moat, which was rather broad, but which was filled with abundant and bushy vegetation instead of with water, separated the park from the high-road; it was lined with freestone, and the angles bristled with gigantic spikes, which looked as if they had grown like natural plants between the disjointed blocks of the wall. A little one-arched bridge crossed this dry channel and gave access to the gateway.

"An avenue of lofty elms, arched like an arbour and cut in the old style, appeared before you first of all; and, after following it for some time, you arrived at a kind of cross-roads.

"A kind of servant, looking half labourer and half groom, at last appeared and taking our beasts by the bridle led them away. I had not as yet seen a living soul, with the exception of a little peasant-girl, as timid and who had fled at the sight of us and crouched down in a furrow behind some hemp, although we had called to her over and over again, and done all we could to reassure her.

"No one was to be seen at the windows; you would have thought that the mansion was not inhabited at all, or only by spirits, for not the slightest sound could be heard from without.

"We were beginning to ascend the steps, jingling our spurs for our legs were rather numb, when we heard a noise inside like the opening and shutting of doors, as if some one were hastening to meet us.

"In fact, a young woman appeared at the top of the steps, cleared the space separating her from my companion at a single bound, and threw herself on his neck. He embraced her most affectionately, and putting his arm round her waist, and almost lifting her up, carried her in this way to the top.

" 'Do you know that you are very amiable and polite for a brother, my dear Alcibiades? It is not at all unnecessary, sir, is it, to apprise you that he is my brother, for he certainly has scarcely the ways of one?' said the young and

fair one turning towards me.

"To which I replied that a mistake might possibly be made about it, and that it was in some measure a misfortune to be her brother and be thus excluded from the list of her adorers; and that were this my case, I should become at once the happiest and most miserable cavalier on the earth. This made her smile gently.

" 'Alcibiades, I will have my aunt informed of your arrival.'

" 'Oh! there is no great hurry about that, my dear sister, let us sit down first and talk a little. I have to introduce to you a gentleman, Théodore de Sérannes, who will spend some time here. I have no need to recommend you to give him a hearty welcome; he is himself a sufficient recommendation.' (I am telling you what he said; do not accuse me unreasonably of conceit.)

"The fair one slightly bent her head as though to give assent, and we spoke of something else.

"While conversing, I looked at her minutely, and examined her with more attention than I had found possible until then.

"She was perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, and her mourning was most becoming to her; truth to tell, she had not a very lugubrious or disconsolate appearance, and I suspect that she would have eaten the ashes of her Mausolus in her soup like rhubarb. I do not know whether she had wept plenteously for her deceased spouse; if so, there was, at all events, little appearance of it, and the pretty cambric handkerchief which she held in her hand was as perfectly dry as it was possible to be.

"Her eyes were not red, but, on the contrary, were the brightest and most brilliant in the world, and you would have sought in vain on her cheeks for the furrow where her tears had flowed; there were in fact only two little dimples hollowed by an habitual smile, and it is right to say that, for a widow, her teeth were very frequently to be seen—certainly not a disagreeable sight, for they were small and very regular. I esteemed her at the very first for not having believed that, because a husband had died, she was obliged

to discolour her eyes and give herself a violet nose. I was also grateful to her for not assuming a doleful little air, and for speaking naturally, with her sonorous and silvery voice, without drawling her words and breaking her phrases with virtuous sighs.

"This appeared to me in very good taste; I judged her from the first to be a woman of sense, as indeed she is.

"She was well made, with a very becoming hand and foot; her black costume was arranged with all possible coquettishness, and so gaily that the lugubriousness of the colour completely disappeared, and she might have gone to a ball dressed as she was without any one considering it strange. If ever I marry and become a widow, I shall ask for a pattern of her dress, for it becomes her angelically.

"After some conversation we went up to see the old aunt.

"We found her seated in a large, easy-backed arm-chair, with a little stool under her foot, and beside her an old dog bleared and sullen, which raised its black muzzle at our arrival, and greeted us with a very unfriendly growl.

"Nevertheless, this old woman had retained some simple and majestic traces of her former beauty which prevented her from falling into that roast-apple ugliness which is the portion of women who have been only pretty or simply fresh; her eyes, though terminating at their corners in claws of wrinkles, and covered with large, soft eyelids, still possessed a few sparks of their early fire, and you could see that in the last reign they must have darted dazzling lightnings of passion. Her thin and delicate nose, somewhat curved like the beak of a bird of prey, gave to her profile a sort of serious grandeur, which was tempered by the indulgent smile of her Austrain lip, painted with carmine, after the fashion of the last century.

"The old lady received us with that exquisite ease and politeness which is the gift of those who belonged to the old court, and the secret of which seemingly is being lost from day to day, like so many excellent secrets, and with a voice which, broken and tremulous as it was, still possessed great sweetness.

"I appeared to please her greatly, and she looked at me

for a very long time with much attention and with apparently deep emotion. A tear formed in the corner of her eye and crept slowly down one of her great wrinkles, wherein it was lost and dried. She begged me to excuse her and told me that I was very like a son of hers who had been killed in the army.

"In order to appear perfectly like a man, and to divert myself a little, I thought that I could not do better than woo my friend's sister. It appeared very funny to me to throw myself on all fours when she dropped her glove and restore it to her with profound obeisances, to bend over the back of her easy-chair with an adorably languorous little air, and to drop a thousand and one of the most charming madrigals into the hollow of her ear. As soon as she wished to pass from one room to another I would gracefully offer her my hand; if she mounted on horseback I held the stirrup, and when walking I was always by her side; in the evening I read to her and sang with her; in brief, I performed all the duties of a 'cavaliere servente' with scrupulous exactness.

"I pretended everything that I had seen lovers do, which amused me and made me laugh like the true madcap that I am, when I was alone in my room, and reflected on all the impertinent things I had just uttered in the most serious tone in the world.

"Alcibiades and the old marchioness appeared to view this intimacy with pleasure and very often left us together. I sometimes regretted that I was not really a man, that I might have profited better by it; had I been one, the matter would have been in my own hands, for our charming widow seemed to have totally forgotten the deceased, or, if she did remember him, she would willingly have been faithless to his memory.

"After beginning in this fashion I could not honourably draw back again, and it was very difficult to effect a retreat with arms and baggage; yet I could not go beyond a certain limit, nor had I much knowledge of how to be amiable except in words: I hoped to be able to reach in this way the end of the month which I was to spend at R——and then to retire, promising to return, but without the intention of doing so.

I thought that at my departure the fair one would console herself, and seeing me no more would soon forget me.

"But in my sport I had aroused a serious passion, and things turned out differently—an illustration of a long well drawn truth, namely, that you should never play either with fire or with love.

"Before seeing me, Rosette knew nothing of love. Married very young to a man much older than herself, she had been unable to feel for him anything more than a sort of filial friendship: no doubt she had been courted, but, extraordinary as it may appear, she had not had a lover: either the gallants who had paid her attention were sorry seducers, or, what is more likely, her hour had not yet struck. Country squires and lordlings, always talking of fumets and leashes, hog-steers and antlers, morts and stags of ten, and mingling the whole with almanac charades and madrigals mouldy with age, were certainly little adapted to suit her, and her virtue had not to struggle much to resist them.

"Rosette's destiny was to love only once in her lifetime, and with an impossible love; she must fulfil it, and she will fulfil it.

"I have been loved, O Graciosa! and it is a sweet thing, though it was only by a woman, and though there was an element of pain in such an irregular love which cannot belong to the other;—oh! a very sweet thing! When you awake in the night and rise upon your elbow and say to yourself: 'Someone is thinking or dreaming of me; some one is occupied with my life; a movement of my eyes or lips makes the joy or the sadness of another creature; a word that I have chanced to let fall is carefully gathered up and commented on and turned over for whole hours; I am the pole to which a restless magnet points, my eye is a heaven, my mouth a paradise more desired than the true one; were I to die, a warm rain of tears would revive my ashes, and my tomb would be more flowery than a marriage gift; were I in danger some one would rush between the sword's point and my breast; everything would be sacrificed for me!'—it is glorious; I do not know what more one can wish for in the world.

"Many men are more womanish than I, I have little of the woman, except the breast a few rounder lines, and more delicate hands; the skirt is on my hips, and not in my disposition. It often happens that the sex of the soul does not at all correspond with that of the body, and this is a contradiction which cannot fail to produce great disorder. For my own part, for instance, if I had not taken this resolution —mad in appearance, but in reality very wise—and renounced the garments of a sex which is mine only materially and accidently, I should have been very unhappy: I like horses, fencing, and all violent exercises; I take pleasure in climbing and running about like a youth; it wearies me to remain sitting with my feet close together and my elbows glued to my sides, to cast my eyes modestly down, to speak in a little, soft, honeyed voice, and to pass a bit of wool ten million times through the holes in a canvas; I have not the least liking for obedience, and the expression that I most frequently employ is: 'I will.' Beneath my smooth forehead and silken hair move strong and manly thoughts; all the affected nonsense which chiefly beguiles women has never stirred me to any great degree, and, like Achilles disguised as a young girl, I should be ready to relinquish the mirror for a sword. The only thing that pleases me in women is their beauty; in spite of the inconveniences resulting from it, I would not willingly renounce my form, however ill-assorted it may be with the mind which it contains.

"There was an element of novelty and piquancy in such an intrigue, and I should have been greatly amused by it had it not been taken seriously by poor Rosette. She began to love me most ingenuously and conscientiously, with all the power of her good and beautiful soul—with the love that men do not understand and of which they could not form even a remote conception, tenderly and ardently as I would wish to be loved, and as I should love, could I meet with the reality of my dream. What a splendid treasure lost, what white transparent pearls, such as divers will never find in the casket of the sea! what sweet breaths, what soft sighs dispersed in air, which might have been gathered by pure and amorous lips!

"Such a passion might have rendered a young man so happy! so many luckless ones, handsome, charming, gifted, full of intellect and heart, have vainly supplicated on their knees insensible and gloomy idols! so many good and tender souls have in despair flung themselves into the arms of courtesans, or have silently died away like lamps in tombs, who might have been rescued from debauchery and death by a sincere love!

"What whimsicality is there in human destiny! and what a jester is chance!

"What so many others had eagerly longed for came to me, to me who did not and could not desire it. A capricious young girl takes a fancy to ramble about the country in man's dress in order to obtain some knowledge as to what she may depend upon in the matter of her future lovers; she goes to bed at an inn with a worthy brother who conducts her with the tip of his finger to his sister, who finds nothing better to do than fall in love with her like a puss, like a dove, like all that is most amorous and languorous in the world. It is very evident that, if I had been a young man and this state of things might have been of some service to me, it would have been quite different, and the lady would have abhorred me. Fortune loves thus to give slippers to those who have wooden legs, and gloves to those who have no hands; the inheritance which might have enabled you to live at your ease usually comes to you on the day of your death.

"Sometimes though not so often as she would have wished, I visited Rosette at her bedside; usually she received only when she was up, but this rule was overlooked in my favour. Many other things might have been overlooked, had I wished; but, as they say, the most beautiful girl can only give what she has, and what I had would not have been of much use to Rosette.

"She would stretch out her little hand for me to kiss—and I confess that I did not kiss it without pleasure, for it is very smooth, very white, exquisitely scented, and softly tender with incipient moisture; I could feel it quiver and contract beneath my lips, the pressure of which I would

maliciously prolong. Then Rosette, quite moved and with a look of entreaty, would turn towards me her long eyes laden with voluptuousness and bathed in humid and transparent light, and let her pretty head, raised a little for my better reception, fall back again upon her pillow. Beneath the clothes I could see the undulations of her restless bosom and the sudden movements of her whole frame. Certainly any one in a condition to venture might have ventured much; he would surely have met with gratitude for his temerity, and thankfulness for having skipped some chapters of the romance.

"I used to remain an hour or two with her, without relinquishing the hand I had replaced on the coverlet; we had charming and interminable talks, for although Rosette was very much preoccupied with her love, she believed herself too sure of success to lose much of her freedom and playfulness of disposition. Only now and then would her passion cast a transparent veil of sweet melancholy upon her gaiety, and this rendered her still more pleasing.

"In fact, it would have been an unheard-of thing that a young beginner, such as I was to all appearance, should not have deemed himself very well off with such good fortune and have profited by it to the best of his ability. Rosette, indeed, was by no means one likely to encounter great cruelties, and not knowing more about me, she counted on her charms and on my youth in default of my love.

"Nevertheless, as the situation was beginning to be prolonged beyond its natural limits, she became uneasy about it, and scarcely could a redoubling of flattering phrases and fine protestations restore her to her former state of unconcern. Two things astonished her in me, and she noticed contradictions in my conduct which she was unable to reconcile: they were my warmth of speech and my coldness of action.

"You know better than any one, my dear Graciosa, that my friendship has all the characteristics of a passion; it is sudden, eager, keen, exclusive, with love even to jealousy, and my friendship for Rosette was almost exactly similar to the friendship I have for you. A mistake might have been

caused by less. Rosette was the more completely mistaken about it, because the dress I wore scarcely allowed of her having a different idea.

"As I have never yet loved a man, the excess of my tenderness has, in a measure, found a vent in my friendships with young girls and young women; I have displayed the same transport and exultation in them as I do in everything else, for I find it impossible to be moderate in anything, and especially in what concerns the heart. In my eyes there are only two classes of people—those whom I worship, and those whom I execrate; the others are to me as though they did not exist, and I would urge my horse over them as I would over the highway: they are identical in my mind with pavements and milestones.

"I am naturally expansive, and have very caressing manners. When walking with Rosette, I would sometimes, forgetful of the import of such demonstrations, pass my arm about her person as I used to do when we walked together in the lonely alley at the end of my uncle's garden; or, perhaps, leaning on the back of her easy-chair while she was working embroidery, I would roll the fair down on the plump nape of her neck between my fingers, or with the back of my hand smooth her beautiful hair stretched by the comb and give it additional lustre—or, perhaps, it would be some other of those endearments which, as you know, I habitually employ with my dear friends.

"She took very good care not to attribute these caresses to mere friendship. Friendship, as it is usually understood, does not go to such heights; but seeing that I went no further, she was inwardly astonished and scarcely knew what to think; she decided thus: that it was excessive timidity on my part, caused by my extreme youth and lack of experience in love affairs, and that I must be encouraged by all kinds of advances and kindnesses.

"One day, after having made me wander for a long time through a very picturesque park which extended for a great distance behind the mansion, and which was unknown to me with the exception of those parts which were in the neighbourhood of the buildings, she led me, by a little capriciously

winding path bordered with elders and hazel trees, to a rustic cot, a kind of charcoal-burner's hut built of billets placed transversely, with a roof of reeds, and a door coarsely made of five or six pieces of roughly-planed wood, the interstices of which were stopped up with mosses and wild plants; quite close, among the green roots of tall ashes with silvery bark, dotted here and there with dark patches, gushed a vigorous spring, which, a few feet further on, fell over two marble steps into a basin filled with cress of more than emerald green.

"At places where there was no cress might be seen fine sand as white as snow; the water had the transparency of crystal and the coldness of ice; issuing suddenly from the ground, and never touched by the faintest sun-ray, beneath those impenetrable shades, it had no time to become warm or troubled. In spite of its crudity I love such spring water, and, seeing it there so limpid, I could not resist a desire to drink of it; I stooped down and took some several times in the hollow of my hand, having no other vessel at my disposal.

"Rosette intimated a wish to drink also of this water to quench her thirst, and requested me to bring her a few drops, for she dared not, she said, stoop down far enough to reach it herself. I plunged both my hands, which I had joined together as accurately as possible, into the clear fountain, then raised them like a cup to Rosette's lips, and kept them thus until she had drained the water contained in them—not a long time, for there was very little, and that little trickled through my fingers, however tightly I closed them; it made a very pretty group, and it is almost a pity that there was no sculptor to take a sketch of it.

"When she had almost finished and my hand was close to her lips, she could not refrain from kissing it, in such a way, however, as to make it look like an act of suction for the purpose of draining the last pearl of water gathered in my palm; but I was not deceived by it, and the charming blush which suddenly overspread her countenance betrayed her plainly enough.

"She took my arm again, and we proceeded towards the

cot. The fair one walked as close to me as possible, and when speaking to me leaned over in such a way that her bosom rested entirely on my sleeve—a very cunning position, and one capable of disturbing any one else but me; I could feel its pure firm outline and soft warmth perfectly well—nay, I could even remark a hurried undulating motion which, whether affected or real, was none the less flattering and engaging.

"In this way we reached the door of the cot, which I opened with a kick, and I was certainly not prepared for the sight that met my eyes. I had thought that the hut was carpeted with rushes, with a mat on the floor and a few stools to rest on; not at all.

"It was a boudoir furnished with all imaginable elegance. The frieze panels represented the gallantest scenes in Ovid's Metamorphoses: Salmacis and Hermaphrodite, Venus and Adonis, Apollo and Daphne, and other mythological loves in bright lilac camaieu; the piers were formed of pompon roses very delicately sculptured, and little daisies, which, with a refinement of luxury, had only their hearts gilded, their leaves being silvered. All the furniture was edged with silver cord which relieved a tapestry of the softest blue that could possibly be found, and one marvellously adapted to set off the whiteness and lustre of the skin; mantelpiece, consoles, and what-nots were laden with a thousand charming curiosities, and there was such a luxurious number of settees, couches and sofas, as pretty clearly showed that this nook was not designed for very austere occupations, and that certainly no maceration went on in it.

"A handsome rock-work clock, standing on a richly-inlaid pedestal, faced a large Venetian mirror, and was repeated in it with singular gleamings and reflections. It had stopped, moreover, as though it would have been something superfluous to mark the hours in a place intended to forget them.

"I told Rosette that this refinement of luxury pleased me, that I thought it in very good taste to conceal the greatest choiceness beneath an appearance of simplicity, and that I greatly approved of a woman having embroidered

petticoats and lace-trimmed chemises with an outer covering of simple material; that to the lover whom she had or might have it was a delicate attention for which he could not be sufficiently grateful, and that it was unquestionably better to put a diamond into a nut, than a nut into a golden box.

"To prove to me that she was of my opinion, Rosette raised her dress a little and showed me the edge of a petticoat very richly embroidered with large flowers and leaves; it only rested with myself to be let into the secret of greater internal magnificence; but I did not ask to see whether the splendour of the chemise corresponded with that of the petticoat: it is probable that it was equally luxurious. Rosette let the fold of her dress fall again, vexed at not having shown more.

"Nevertheless, the exhibition had been sufficient to display the beginning of a perfectly turned calf, suggesting the most excellent ascensional ideas. The leg which she held out in order to show off her petticoat to better advantage was indeed miraculously delicate and graceful in its neat well-drawn stocking of pearl-grey silk, and the little heeled shoe, adorned with a tuft of ribbons in which it terminated, was like the glass slipper worn by Cinderella. I paid her very sincere compliments about it, and told her that I had never known a prettier leg or a smaller foot, and that I did not think they could possibly be of a better shape. To which she replied with charming and lively frankness and ingenuousness:

" ' 'Tis true.'

"Then she went to a panel contrived in the wall, took out one or two flagons of liquers and some plates of sweetmeats and cakes, placed the whole on a little round table, and came and sat down besides me in a somewhat narrow easy-chair, so that, in order not to be very uncomfortable, I was obliged to pass my arm behind her waist. As she had both hands free, and I had just my left to make use of, she filled my glass herself, and put fruits and sweets upon my plate; and soon even, seeing that I was rather awkward, she said to me: 'Come, leave it alone; I am going to feed you,

child, since you are not able to eat all by yourself.' Then she herself conveyed the morsels to my mouth, and forced me to swallow them more quickly than I wished, pushing them in with her pretty fingers, just as people do with birds that are being crammed, and laughing very much over it.

"I could scarcely dispense with paying her fingers back the kiss which she had lately given to the palms of my hands, and, as though to prevent me from doing so, but really to enable me to impart a greater pressure to my kiss she struck my mouth two or three times with the back of her hand.

"She had drunk a few drops of Crème des Barbades, with a glass of Canary, and I about as much. It was certainly not a great deal; but it was sufficient to enliven a couple of women accustomed to drink scarcely anything stronger than water. Rosette leaned backwards, throwing herself across my arm in very amorous fashion. She had cast aside her mantle, and the upper part of her bosom, strained and stretched by this arched position, could be seen; it was enchantingly delicate and transparent in tone, while its shape was one of marvellous daintiness and solidity combined. I contemplated her for some time with indefinable emotion and pleasure, and the reflection occurred to me that men were more favoured in their loves than we, seeing that we gave them possession of the most charming treasures while they had nothing similar to offer us.

"What a pleasure it must be to let their lips wander over this smooth fine skin, and these rounded curves which seem to go out to meet the kiss and challenge it! this satin flesh, these undulating and mutually involving lines, this silky hair so soft to the touch; what exhaustless sources of delicate voluptuousness which we do not possess in common with men! Our caresses can scarcely be other than passive, and yet it is a greater pleasure to give than to receive.

"These are remarks which undoubtedly I should not have made last year, and I might have seen all the bosoms and shoulders in the world without caring whether their shape was good or bad; but, since I have laid aside the dress belonging to my sex and have lived with young men, a feeling

which was unknown to me has developed within me: the feeling of beauty. Women are usually denied it, I know not why, for at first sight they would seem better able to judge of it than men; but as they are the possessors of beauty, and self-knowledge is more difficult than that of any other description, it is not surprising that they know nothing at all about it.

"The fair one had thrown herself back across my arm and her head was resting against my shoulder; emotion shaded her beautiful cheeks with a tender rose-colour which was admirably set off by the deep black of a very coquettishly placed little patch; her teeth gleamed through her smile like raindrops in the depths of a poppy, and the humid splendour of her large eyes was still further heightened by her half-drooping lashes; a ray of light caused a thousand metallic lustres to play on her silky clouded hair, some locks of which had escaped and were rolling in ringlets along her plump round neck, and relieving its warm whiteness; a few little downy hairs, more mutinous than the rest, had got loose from the mass, and were twisting themselves in capricious spirals, gilded with singular reflections, and, traversed by the light, assuming all the shades of the prism: you would have thought that they were such golden threads as surround the heads of the virgins in the old pictures. We both kept silence, and I amused myself with tracing her little azure-blue veins through the nacreous transparency of her temples, and the soft insensible depression of the down at the extremities of her eyebrows.

"The fair one seemed to be inwardly meditating and to be lulling herself in dreams of infinite voluptuousness; her arms hung down along her body as undulating and as soft as loosened scarfs; her head bent back more and more as though the muscles supporting it had been cut or were too feeble for their task. She had gathered up her two little feet beneath her petticoat, and had succeeded in crouching down altogether in the corner of the lounge that I was occupying, in such a way that, although it was a very narrow piece of furniture, there was a large empty space on the other side.

"Her easy, supple body modelled itself on mine like wax, following its external outline with the greatest possible accuracy: water would not have crept into all the sinuosity of line with more exactness. Clinging thus to my side, she suggested the double stroke which painters give their drawings on the side of the shadow, in order to render them more free and full. Only with a woman in love can there be such undulations and entwinings. Ivy and willow are a long way behind.

"The soft warmth of her body penetrated through her garments and mine; a thousand magnetic currents streamed around her; her whole life seemed to have left her altogether and to have entered into me. Every minute she was more languishing, expiring, yielding; a light sweat stood in beads upon her lustrous brow; her eyes grew moist, and two or three times she made as though she would raise her hands to hide them; but half-way her wearied arms fell back upon her knees, and she could not succeed in doing so;—a big tear overflowed from her eyelid and rolled along her burning cheek where it was soon dried.

"My situation was becoming very embarrassing and tolerably ridiculous; I felt that I must look enormously stupid, and this provoked me extremely, although no alternative was in my power. Enterprising conduct was forbidden me, and such was the only kind that would have been suitable. I was too sure of meeting with no resistance to risk it, and I was, in fact, at my wits' end. To pay compliments and repeat madrigals would have been excellent at the beginning but nothing would have appeared more insipid at the stage that we had reached; to get up and go out would have been unmannerly in the extreme; and besides I am not sure that Rosette would not have played the part of Potiphar's wife, and held me by the corner of my cloak.

"I could not have assigned any virtuous motive for my resistance; and then, I confess it to my shame, the scene, equivocal as its nature was for me, was not without a charm which detained me more than it should have done; this ardent desire kindled me with its flame, and I was really sorry to be unable to satisfy it. I even wished to be

actually appeared to be, a man, that I might crown this love, and I greatly regretted that Rosette was deceived. My breathing became hurried, I felt blushes rising to my face, and I was little less troubled than my poor lover. The idea of our similitude in sex gradually faded away, leaving behind only a vague idea of pleasure; my gaze grew dim, my lips trembled, and, had Rosette been a man instead of what she was, she would assuredly have made a very easy conquest of me.

"At last, unable to bear it any longer, she got up abruptly with a sort of spasmodic movement, and began to walk about the room with great activity; then she stopped before the mirror and adjusted some locks of her hair which had lost their folds. During this promenade I cut a poor figure, and scarcely knew how to look.

"She stopped before me and appeared to reflect.

"She thought that it was only a desperate timidity that restrained me, and that I was more of a schoolboy than she had thought at first. Besides herself and excited to the last degree of amorous exasperation, she would try one supreme effort and stake all on the result at the risk of losing the game.

"She came up to me, sat down on my knees more quickly than lightning, passed her arms round my neck, crossed her hands behind my head, and clung with her lips to mine in a furious embrace; I felt her half-naked and rebellious bosom bounding against my breast, and her twined fingers twitching in my hair. A shiver ran through my whole body, and my heart beat violently.

"Rosette did not release my mouth; her lips enveloped mine, her teeth struck against my teeth, our breaths were mingled. I drew back for an instant, and turned my head aside two or three times to avoid this kiss; but a resistless attraction made me again advance, and I returned it with nearly as much ardour as she had given it. I scarcely know how it would all have ended had not a loud barking been heard outside the door, together with the sound of scratching feet. The door yielded, and a handsome white greyhound came yelping and gambolling into the cot.

"Rosette rose up suddenly, and with a bound sprang to the end of the room. The handsome white greyhound leaped gleefully and joyously about her, and tried to reach her hands in order to lick them; she was so much agitated that she found great difficulty in arranging her mantle upon her shoulders.

"This greyhound was her brother Alcibiades's favourite dog; it never left him, and whenever it appeared, its master to a certainty was not far off; this is what had so greatly frightened poor Rosette.

"In fact Alcibiades himself entered a minute later, booted and spurred, and whip in hand. 'Ah! there you are,' said he; 'I have been looking for you for an hour past, and I should certainly not have found you had not my good grey hound Snug unearthed you in your hiding place.' And he cast a half-serious, half-playful look upon his sister which made her blush up to the eyes. 'Apparently you must have had very knotty subjects to treat of, to retire into such profound solitude? You were no doubt talking about theology and the twofold nature of the soul?'

" 'Oh! dear no; our occupation was not nearly so sublime; we were eating cakes and talking about the fashions—that is all.'

" 'I don't believe a word of it; you appeared to me to be deep in some sentimental dissertation; but to divert you from your vaporish conversation, I think that it would be a good thing if you came and took a ride with me. I have a new mare that I want to try. You shall ride her as well, Théodore, and we will see what can be made of her.'

"We went out all three together, he giving me his arm, and I giving mine to Rosette. The expressions on our faces were singularly different. Alcibiades looked thoughtful, I quite at ease, and Rosette excessively annoyed.

"Alcibiades had arrived very opportunely for me, but very inopportunely for Rosette, who thus lost, or thought she lost all the fruits of her skilful attacks and ingenious tactics. No progress had been made; a quarter of an hour later and the devil take me if I know what issue the adventure could have had—I cannot see one that would not have been im-

possible. Perhaps it might have been better if Alcibiades had not come in at the ticklish moment like a god in his machine: the thing must have ended in one way or another. During the scene I was two or three times on the point of acknowledging who I was to Rosette; but the dread of being thought an adventuress and of seeing my secret revealed kept back the words that were ready to escape from my lips.

"Such a state of things could not last. My departure was the only means of cutting short this bootless intrigue, and accordingly I announced officially at dinner that I should leave the very next day. Rosette, who was sitting beside me, nearly fainted on hearing this piece of news, and let her glass fall. A sudden paleness overspread her beautiful face: she cast on me a mournful and reproachful look which made me nearly as much affected and troubled as she was herself.

"The aunt raised her old wrinkled hands with a movement of painful surprise, and said in her shrill, trembling voice, which was even more tremulous than usual: 'My dear Monsieur Théodore, are you going to leave us in that fashion? That is not right; yesterday you did not seem in the least disposed to go. The post has not come, and so you have received no letters, and are without any motive. You had granted us a fortnight longer, and now you are taking it back; you have really no right to do so: what has been given cannot be taken away again. See how Rosette is looking at you, and how angry she is with you; I warn you that I shall be at least as angry as she is, and look quite as sternly at you, and a stern face at sixty-eight is a little more terrible than one at twenty-three. See to what you are voluntarily exposing yourself: the wrath both of aunt and niece, and all on account of some caprice which has suddenly entered your head at dessert.'

"Alcibiades, giving the table a great blow with his fist, swore that he would barricade the doors of the mansion and hamstring my horse sooner than let me go.

"Rosette cast another look upon me, and one so sad and supplicating that nothing short of the ferocity of a tiger

that had been fasting for a week could have failed to be moved by it. I did not withstand it, and though it gave me singular annoyance, I made a solemn promise to stay. Dear Rosette would willingly have fallen on my neck and kissed me on the mouth for this kindness: Alcibiades enclosed my hand in his huge one and shook my arm so violently that he nearly dislocated my shoulder, made my rings oval instead of round, and cut three of my fingers somewhat deeply.

"The old lady, rejoicing took an immense pinch of snuff.

"Rosette, however, did not completely recover her gaiety; the idea that I might go away and that I wished to do so, an idea which had never yet come clearly before her mind, plunged her deep in thought. The colour which had been chased from her cheeks by the announcement of my departure did not return to them with the same brilliance as before; there still was paleness on her cheek and disquiet in the depths of her soul. My conduct towards her surprised her more and more. After the marked advances which she had made, she could not understand the motives which induced me to put so much restraint into my relations with her; her object was to lead me up to a perfectly decisive engagement before my departure, not doubting that afterwards she would find it extremely easy to keep me as long as she liked.

"Rosette intended to bring me to something decisive before my departure. Knowing how difficult it is to subsequently take up a *liaison* just where it had been dropped, and being besides not at all sure of finding me again under such favourable circumstances, she neglected no opportunity that presented itself of placing me in a position to speak out clearly and abandon the evasive demeanour behind which I had entrenched myself. As on my part, I had the most formal intention of avoiding every species of meeting similar to that in the rustic pavilion, and yet could not without being ridiculous, effect much coolness towards Rosette and assume girlish prudery in my relations with her, I scarcely knew how to behave, and tried always to have a third person with us.

"Rosette, on the contrary, did everything in her power to secure being alone with me, and, as the mansion was at a

distance from town and seldom visited by the neighbouring nobility, she frequently succeeded in her design. My obtuse resistance saddened and surprised her; there were moments when she had doubts and hesitations about the power of her charms, and, seeing herself so little loved, she was sometimes not far from believing herself ugly. Then she would redouble her attention and coquetry, and although her mourning did not permit her to make use of all the resources of the toilet, she nevertheless knew how to give it grace and variety in such a manner as to be twice or thrice as charming every day—which is saying a great deal. She tried everything: she was playful, melancholy, tender, impassioned, kind, coquettish, and even affected; she put on in succession all those adorable masks which become women so well that it is impossible to say whether they are veritable masks or real faces;—she assumed eight or ten contrasted individualities one after another in order to see which pleased me, and to fix upon it. In herself alone she provided me with a complete seraglio wherein I had only to throw the handkerchief; but she had, of course, no success.

"The failure of all these stratagems threw her into a state of profound stupefaction. She would, indeed, have turned Nestor's brain, and melted the ice of the chaste Hippolytus himself,—and I appeared to be anything but Nestor or Hippolytus. I am young, and I had a lofty and determined air, boldness of speech, and everywhere except in solitary interviews, a resolute countenance.

"She suffered, but without complaint or bitterness, and she attributed the failure of her attempts only to herself. Nevertheless her paleness increased every day; a mighty combat had been waged on the battle-field of her cheeks between the lilies and the roses, and the latter had been decisively routed; it distressed me, but in all truth I was less able than anyone to remedy it. The more gentle and affectionate my words and the more caressing my manner, the more deeply I plunged into her heart the barbed arrow of impossible love. To comfort her to-day I made ready a much greater despair for the future; my remedies poisoned her wound while appearing to soothe it. I repented in a

measure of all the agreeable things I had ever said to her, and, owing to my extreme friendship for her, I would fain have discovered the means to make her hate me. Disinterestedness could not be carried further, for such a result would unquestionably have greatly grieved me;—but it would have been better.

"I made two or three attempts to speak harshly to her, but I soon returned to madrigals, for I dread her tears even more than her smile. On such occasions, although the honesty of my intention fully acquitted me in my conscience, I was more touched than I should have been, and felt something not far removed from remorse. A tear can scarcely be dried except by a kiss; the office cannot decently be left to a handkerchief, be it of the finest cambric in the world, I undid what I had done, the tear was quickly forgotten, more quickly than the kiss, and there always ensued an increase of embarrassment for me.

"One evening, by some chance or other, I happened to be alone with the old lady in the green room;—she had some tapestry work in her hand, for, in spite of her sixty-eight years, she never remained idle, wishing, as she said, to finish before she died a task which she had commenced and at which she had now wrought for a long time. Feeling somewhat fatigued, she laid her work aside and lay back in her large easy-chair. She looked at me very attentively, and her grey eyes sparkled through her spectacles with strange vivacity; she passed her hand two or three times across her wrinkled forehead, and appeared to be reflecting deeply. The recollection of times that were no more and that she regretted imparted an expression of emotion to her face. I did not speak lest I should disturb her in her thoughts, and the silence lasted for some minutes. At last she broke it.

"They are Henri's—my dear Henri's very eyes; the same humid and brilliant gaze, the same carriage of the head, the same sweet and proud physiognomy; one would think it were he. You cannot imagine the extent of this likeness, Monsieur Théodore; when I see you I cannot believe that Henri is dead; I think that he has only been on a long

journey, and has now at last come back. You have given me much pleasure and much pain, Théodore: pleasure by reminding me of my poor Henri, and pain by showing me how great has been my loss; sometimes I have taken you for his phantom. I cannot reconcile myself to the idea that you are going to leave us; it seems to me like losing my Henri once more.'

"I told her that if it were really possible for me to remain longer I should do so with pleasure, but that my stay had already been prolonged far beyond the limits it should have had; besides, I quite expected to return, and I should retain memories of the mansion far too agreeable to forget it so quickly.

" 'However sorry I may be at your departure, Monsieur Théodore,' she resumed, pursuing her own train of thought, 'there is some one here who will feel it more than I. You understand whom I mean without my telling you. I do not know what we shall do with Rosette when you are gone; but this old place is very dull. Alcibiades is always hunting, and for a young girl like her, the society of a poor infirm woman like me is not very diverting.'

" 'If anyone should have regrets, it is not you, madame, nor Rosette, but I; you are losing little, I much, you will easily discover society more charming than mine, but it is more than doubtful whether I shall ever be able to replace Rosette's and yours.'

" 'I do not wish to pick a quarrel with your modesty, my dear sir, but I know what I know, and what I say is fact. It will probably be a long time before we see Madame Rosette in a good humour again, for at present her smiles and tears depend only on you. Her mourning is about to end, and it would be a pity if she laid aside her gaiety with her last black dress; it would be a very bad example, and quite contrary to natural laws. This is a thing which you could prevent without much trouble, and which you will prevent, no doubt,' said the old lady, laying great emphasis on the last words.

" 'Unquestionably I will do all in my power that your dear niece may not lose her charming gaiety, since you

suppose me to have such influence over her. Nevertheless, I scarcely see what method I can adopt.'

" 'Oh! really, you scarcely see! What are your handsome eyes for? I did not know that you were so short-sighted. Rosette is free; she has an income of eighty thousand livres wholly under her own control, and women twice as ugly as she is, are often considered pretty. You are young, handsome, and, as I imagine, unmarried; it appears to me to be the simplest thing in the world, unless you have an unsurmountable horror of Rosette, which it is difficult to believe——'

" 'Which is not and could not be the case, for her soul is as excellent as her person, and she is one of those who might be ugly without our noticing it or wishing them otherwise——'

" 'She might be ugly with impunity and she is charming. That is to be doubly in the right; I have no doubt of what you say, but she has taken the wisest course. So far as she is concerned I would willingly answer for it that there are a thousand whom she hates more than you, and that if she were asked several times she would perhaps end by confessing that you do not altogether displease her. You have a ring on your finger which would suit her perfectly, for your hand is nearly as small as hers, and I am almost sure that she would accept it with pleasure.'

"The good lady stopped for a few moments to see what effect her words would produce on me, and I do not know whether she had reason to be satisfied with the expression of my face. I was cruelly embarrassed and did not know what to reply. From the beginning of the conversation I had perceived the tendency of all her insinuations; and, although I almost expected what she had just said, I was quite surprised and confused by it; I could not but refuse; but what valid motives could I give for such a refusal? I had none, except that I was a woman; an excellent motive it is true, but precisely the only one that I was unwilling to state.

13

"Theodore,—Rosalind,—for I know not by what name to call you,—I have only just seen you and I am writing to you.—Would that I knew your woman's name! it must be pleasant as honey, and hover sweeter and more harmonious than poetry on the lips! Never could I have dared to tell you this, and yet I should have died for lack of saying it. What I have suffered no one knows nor can know, nor could I myself give any but a faint idea of it; word will not express such anguish; I should appear to have turned my phrases carefully, to have striven to say new and singular things, and to be indulging in the most extravagant exaggeration when merely depicting what I have experienced with the help of unsatisfying images.

"Every gesture, every pose of your head, every different aspect of your beauty, are graven with a diamond point upon the mirror of my soul, and nothing in the world could efface the deep impression; I know in what place the shadow was, and in what the light, the flat part glistening beneath the ray, and the spot where the wandering reflection was blended with the more softened tints of neck and cheek. I could draw you in your absence; the idea of you is ever placed before me.

"Are you Apollo driven from heaven or the fair Aphrodite coming forth from the bosom of the sea? where have you left your chariot of gems yoked with its four flaming steeds? what have you done with your nacreous conch and your azure-tailed dolphins? what amorous nymph has blended her body with yours in the midst of a kiss, O handsome youth, more charming than Cyparissus and Adonis, more adorable than all women?

"But you are a woman, and we are no longer in the days of metamorphoses; Adonis and Hermaphrodite are dead, and such a degree of beauty can no longer be attained by

man;—for, since heroes and gods have ceased to be, you alone preserve in your marble bodies, as in a Grecian temple, the precious gift of form anathematized by Christ, and show that the earth has no cause to envy heaven; you worthily represent the first divinity of the world, the purest symbolisation of the eternal essence,—beauty.

"You came, and I had reason to reproach my imagination with its impotence. My torment was not what I dreaded, to be the perpetual prey of an idea on a sterile rock; but I suffered none the less. I had seen that you did in fact exist, that my presentiments had not been false to me on this point; but you manifested yourself to me with the ambiguous and terrible beauty of the sphinx. Like the mysterious goddess, Isis, you were wrapped in a veil which I dared not raise lest I should be stricken dead.

"If you knew with what panting and restless heed, beneath my apparent inattention, I watched you and followed you even in your slightest movements! Nothing escaped me; how eagerly I gazed upon the little flesh that appeared at your neck or wrist in my endeavour to determine your sex! your hands have been the subject of profound studies by me, and I am able to say that I know their smallest curves, their most imperceptible veins, and their slightest dimple; though you were to conceal yourself from head to foot in the most impenetrable domino, I should recognise you on seeing merely one of your fingers. I analysed the undulations in your walk, the manner in which you placed your feet, and dressed your hair; I sought to discover your secret in the habits of your body. I especially watched you in those hours of indolence when the bones seem to be withdrawn from the body and the limbs sink and bend as though they had lost their stiffness, to see whether the feminine line would be more boldly pronounced amid this forgetfulness and carelessness. Never was anyone eyed so eagerly as you.

"I would be voyaging with flowing sails over the limitless ocean of amorous dreaming, and you would come and ask me to fence or play tennis with you: the young girl, transformed into a young cavalier, would give me terrible blows

and strike the foil from my hand as quickly and cleverly as the most experienced swashbuckler; at every moment of the day there was some such disappointment.

"I would be about to approach you and say to you, 'My dear fair one, 'tis you that I adore,' and I would see you bending down tenderly to a lady's ear and breathing puffs of madrigals and compliments through her hair. Judge of my situation. Or, perhaps, some woman whom, in my strange jealousy, I could have flayed alive with all the voluptuousness in the world, would hang on your arm, and draw you aside to confide some puerile secrets to you, and would keep you for hours together in an embrasure of the window.

"I was maddened to see woman talking to you, for it made me believe that you were a man, and, had you been so, it would have cost me extreme pain to endure it. When men came up in a free and familiar fashion, I was still more jealous, because then I thought that you were a woman and that they had a suspicion of it like myself: I was a prey to the most contrary passions and did not know what conclusion to arrive at.

"I was angry with myself, and addressed the harshest reproaches to myself for being thus tormented by such a love and for not having the strength to uproot from my heart the venomous plant which had sprung up there in a night like a poisonous toad-stool: I cursed you, I called you my evil genius: I even believed for a moment that you were Beelzebub in person, for I could not explain the sensation which I experienced in your presence.

"Now, Rosalind, I have the profound certainty that you are the most beautiful of women: I have seen you in the costume of your sex, I have seen your pure and correctly rounded shoulders and arms. The beginning of your bosom, of which your gorget gave a glimpse, could belong only to a young girl: neither the beautiful hunter Meleager, nor the effeminate Bacchus, with their dubious forms, ever had such sweetness of line or such delicacy of skin, even though they be both of Paros marble and polished by the kisses of twenty centuries. I am tormented no longer in this respect.

But this is not all; you are a woman, and my love is no longer reprehensible, I may give myself up to it without remorse and adandon myself to the billow which is bearing me towards you; great and unbridled as the passion that I feel may be, it is permitted and I may confess it; but you, Rosalind, for whom I was consumed in silence and who knew not the immensity of my love, you whom this tardy revelation will only, it may be, surprise, do you not hate me, do you love me, can you ever love me? I do not know,—and I tremble, and am yet more unhappy than before.

"I beseech you, Rosalind, if you do not yet love me, strive to love me who have loved you in spite of everything, and beneath the veil in which you wrap yourself, no doubt out of pity for us: do not devote the remainder of my life to the most frightful despair and the most gloomy discouragement: think that I have worshipped you ever since the first ray of thought shone into my head, that you were revealed to me beforehand, and that, when I was quite little, you appeared to me in my dreams with a crown of dew-drops, two prismatic wings, and the little blue flower in your hand; that you are the end, the means, and the meaning of life; that without you I am but an empty shadow, and that, if you blow upon the flame that you have kindled, nothing will remain within me but a pinch of dust finer and more impalpable than that which besprinkles the very wings of death. Rosalind, you who have so many recipes to cure the sickness of love, cure me, for I am very sick; play your part to the end, cast aside the dress of the handsome page Ganymede, and stretch out your white hand to the younger son of the brave knight Rowland-de-Bois."

14

"I WAS at my window engaged in looking at the stars which were blooming joyously in the gardens of the sky, and

inhaling the perfume of the Marvel of Peru wafted to me by an expiring breeze. The wind from the open casement had extinguished my lamp, the last remaining light in the mansion. My thoughts were degenerating into vague dreaming, and a sort of somnolence was beginning to overtake me; nevertheless, whether owing to fascination by the charm of the night, or to carelessness and forgetfulness, I still remained leaning with my elbow on the stone balustrade. Rosette, no longer seeing the light of my lamp and being unable to distinguish me owing to a great corner of shadow which fell just across the window, had no doubt concluded that I was in bed, and it was for this that she was waiting in order to risk a last desperate attempt. She pushed open the door so softly that I did not hear her enter, and was within two steps of me before I had perceived her. She was very much astonished to see me still up: but, soon recovering from her surprise, she came up to me and took hold of my arm calling me twice by my name;—'Théodore, Théodore!'

"'What! you, Rosette, here, at this hour, quite alone, without a light and so completely undressed!'

"I must tell you that the fair one had nothing on her but a night-mantle of excessively fine cambric, and the triumphant lace-trimmed chemise which I was not willing to see on the day of the famous scene in the little kiosk in the park. Her arms, smooth and cold as marble, were entirely bare, and the linen covering her body was so supple and diaphanous that it allowed the nipples of her breasts to be seen, as in the statues of bathers covered with wet drapery.

"Is that a reproach, Théodore, that you are making against me? or is it only a simple, purely exclamatory phrase? Yes, I, Rosette, the fine lady here, in your very room and not in my own where I ought to be, at eleven or perhaps twelve o'clock at night, with neither duenna, chaperon, nor maid, scantily clad, in a mere night-wrapper:—that is very astonishing, is it not? I am as surprised at it as you are, and scarcely know what explanation to give you.

"As she said this she passed one of her arms around my

body, and let herself fall on the foot of my bed in such a way as to draw me along with her.

" 'Rosette,' I said, endeavouring to disengage myself, 'I am going to try to light the lamp again; there is nothing more melancholy than darkness in a room; and then, when you are here, it is really a sin not to see clearly and so lose the sight of your charms. Allow me by a piece of tinder and a match, to make myself a little portable sun to throw into relief all that the jealous night is effacing beneath its shades.'

" 'It's not worth while: I would as soon you did not see my blushes: I can feel my cheeks burning all over, for it is enough to make me die of shame.' She hid her face upon my breast, and for some minutes remained thus as if suffocated by her emotion.

"As for myself, during this interval, I passed my fingers mechanically through the long ringlets of her disordered hair, and searched my brain for some honourable evasion to relieve me of my embarrassment. I could find none, however, for I had been driven into my last entrenchment, and Rosette appeared perfectly determined not to leave the room as she had entered it. Her attire was of a formidable easy nature, which did not promise well, I myself was wearing only an open dressing-gown which would have been a poor protection for my incognito, so that I was extremely anxious about the result of the battle.

" 'Théodore, listen to me,' said Rosette, rising and throwing back her hair from both sides of her face, as far as I could see by the feeble light which the stars and a very slender crescent of the rising moon shed into the room through the still open window;—'the step which I am taking is a strange one;—everyone would blame me for having taken it. But you are leaving soon, and I love you! I cannot let you go in this way without coming to an explanation with you. Perhaps you will never return; perhaps it is the first and the last time that I am to see you. Who knows where you will go? But wherever you go you will carry away my soul and my life with you. If you had remained I should not have been reduced to this extremity. The happiness of look-

ing at you, of listening to you, of living by your side would have been sufficient for me: I would not have asked for anything more. I would have shut up my love within my heart; you would have thought that you had in me only a good and sincere friend;—but that cannot be. You say that it is absolutely necessary that you should leave.

"It annoys you, Théodore, to see me clinging thus to your footsteps like a loving shadow which cannot but follow you and would fain blend itself with your body; it must displease you always to find behind you beseeching eyes and hands stretched forth to seize the edge of your cloak. I know it, but I cannot prevent myself from acting thus. Besides, you cannot complain; it is your own fault. I was calm, tranquil, almost happy before knowing you. You arrived handsome, young, smiling, like Phœbus the charming god. You paid me the most assiduous and delicate attentions; never was cavalier more sprightly and gallant. Your lips every moment let fall roses and rubies;—everything served you as an opportunity for a madrigal, and you know how to turn the most insignificant phrases so as to convert them into adorable compliments.

"'A woman who had hated you mortally at first would have ended by loving you, and I, I loved you from the very moment when first I saw you. Why do you appear so surprised, then after being so lovable and so well loved? Is it not quite a natural consequence? I am neither mad, nor thoughtless, nor yet a romantic little girl who becomes enamoured of the first sword that she sees. I am well-bred, and I know what life is. What I am doing, every woman, even the most virtuous or most prudish, would equally have done. What was your idea and your intention? to please me, I imagine, for I can suppose no other. How is it, then, that you look sorry, in a measure, for having succeeded so well? Have I, without knowing it, done anything to displease you? I ask your pardon for it. Have you ceased to think me beautiful, or have you discovered some defect in me which repels you?

"'You have the right of being hard to please in beauty, but either you have strangely lied to me, or else I too am

beautiful! I am as young as you, and I love you; why do you now disdain me? You used to be so eager about me, you supported my arm with such constant solicitude, you pressed the hand I surrendered to you so tenderly, you raised such languorous eyes towards me: if you did not love me, what was the use of all this intrigue? Could you perchance have had the cruelty to kindle love in a heart in order to have afterwards a subject for mirth!? Ah! that would be horrible mockery, impiety, sacrilege! such could be the amusement only of a frightful soul, and I cannot believe it of you, quite inexplicable as is your behaviour towards me.

"'What, then, is the cause of this sudden change? For my part, I can see none. What mystery is concealed behind such coldness? I cannot believe that you have a repugnance to me; your conduct proves the contrary, for no one woos a woman he dislikes with such eagerness were he the greatest impostor on earth. O Théodore, what have you against me? who has changed you thus? what have I done to you? If the love which you appeared to have for me has taken its flight, mine, alas! has remained, and I cannot uproot it from my heart. Have pity on me, Théodore, for I am very unhappy. At least pretend to love me a little, and say some gentle words to me; it will not cost you much, unless you have an insurmountable horror of me.'

"At this pathetic portion of her discourse, her sobs completely stifled her voice, she crossed both her hands upon my shoulder and laid her forehead upon them in quite a broken-hearted attitude. All that she said was perfectly correct, and I had no good reply to make. I could not assume a bantering tone. It would not have been suitable. Rosette was not one of those creatures who could be treated so lightly:—I was, moreover, too much affected to be able to do it. I felt myself guilty for having trifled in such a manner with the heart of a charming woman, and I experienced the keenest and sincerest remorse in the world.

"Seeing that I made no reply, the dear child heaved a long sigh and made a movement as though to rise, but she fell back again weighed down by her emotion; then she encircled me in her arms, the freshness of which penetrated my

doublet, laid her face upon mine, and began to weep silently.

"It had a singular effect upon me to feel this exhaustless flow of tears, which did not come from my own eyes, streaming in this way down my cheek. It was not long before they were mingled with mine, and there was a veritable bitter rain sufficient to cause a new deluge had it only lasted forty days.

"At that moment the moon happened to shine straight upon the window; a pale ray dipped into the room and illuminated our taciturn group with a bluish light.

"With her white wrapper, her bare arms, her uncovered breast and throat, of nearly the same colour as her linen, her dishevelled hair and her mournful look, Rosette had the appearance of an alabaster figure of Melancholy seated on a tomb. As to myself I scarcely know what appearance I had since I could not see myself, and there was no glass to reflect my image, but I think that I might very well have posed for a statue of Uncertainty personified.

"I was moved, and bestowed a few more tender caresses than usual upon Rosette; from her hair my hand had descended to her velvety neck, and thence to her smooth round shoulder, which I gently stroked, following its quivering line. The child vibrated beneath my touch like a keyboard beneath a musician's fingers; her flesh started and leaped abruptly, and amorous thrillings ran through her body.

"I myself felt a vague and confused species of desire, whose aim I could not discern, and I felt great voluptuousness in going over these pure delicate contours. I left her shoulder, and, profiting by the hiatus of a fold, suddenly closed my hand upon her little frightened breast, which palpitated distractedly like a turtle-dove surprised in its nest;—from the extreme outline of her cheek which I touched with an almost insensible kiss, I reached her half-parted lips, and we remained like this for some time. I do not know, though, whether it was two minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or an hour; for I had totally lost the notion of time, and I did not know whether I was in heaven or on earth, here on elsewhere, living or dead. The heady wine of voluptuousness had so intoxicated me at the first mouthful

that I had drunk, that any reason I possessed had left me.

"Rosette clasped me more and more tightly in her arms and covered me with her body;—she leaned convulsively upon me and pressed me to her naked, panting breast; at every kiss her life seemed to rush wholly to the spot that was touched, and desert the rest of her person. Strange ideas passed through my head: had I not dreaded the betrayal of my incognito, I should have given play to Rosette's impassioned bursts, and should, perhaps, have made some vain and mad attempt to impart a semblance of reality to the shadow of pleasure so ardently embraced by my fair mistress; I had not yet had a lover, and these keen attacks, these reiterated caresses, the contact with this beautiful body, and these sweet names lost in kisses, agitated me to the highest degree, although they were those of a woman;—and then the nocturnal visit, the romantic passion, the moonlight, all had a freshness and novel charm for me which made me forget that after all I was not a man.

"Nevertheless, making a great effort over myself, I told Rosette that she was compromising herself horribly by coming into my room at such an hour and remaining in it so long and that her women might notice her absence and see that she had not passed the night in her own apartment.

"I said this so gently that Rosette only replied by dropping her cambric mantle and her slippers, and by gliding into my bed like a snake into a bowl of milk; for she imagined that this proceeding on her part might lead to more precise demonstrations upon mine.

"She believed, poor child, that the happy hour which had been so laboriously contrived, was at last about to strike for her; but it only struck two in the morning. My situation was as critical as it well could be, when the door turned on its hinges and gave passage to the very Chevalier Alcibiades in person; he held a candlestick in one hand and his sword in the other.

"He went straight to the bed, threw back the curtains, and, in holding the light to the face of the confused Rosette, said to her in a jeering tone—'Good morning, sister.' Little Rosette was unable to find a word in reply.

"'So it appears, my dearest and most virtuous sister, that having in your wisdom judged that the Seigneur Théodore's bed was softer than your own, you have come to share it? or perhaps it is on account of the ghosts in your room, and you thought that you would be in greater safety in this one under the protection of the said seigneur? 'Tis very well advised. Ah! Chevalier de Sérannes, so you have cast your amorous glance upon my sister, and you think that it will end there. I fancy that it would not be unwholesome to have a little cutting of each other's throats, and if you will be so kind I shall be infinitely obliged to you. Théodore, you have abused the friendship that I had for you, and you make me repent of the good opinion which at the very first I had formed of the integrity of your character it is bad, very bad.'

"I could not offer any valid defence: appearances were against me. Who would have believed me if I had said, as was indeed the case, that Rosette had come into my room in spite of me, and that, far from seeking to please her, I was doing everything in my power to estrange her from me? I had only one thing to say, and I said it—'Seigneur Alcibiades, there shall be as much throat-cutting as you like.'

"During this colloquy, Rosette had not failed to faint according to the soundest rules of the pathetic;—I went to a crystal cup full of water in which the stem of a large white, half leafless rose was immersed, and threw a few drops over her face, which promptly brought her round again.

"Scarcely knowing what face to put on the matter, she crouched down at the bedside and buried her pretty head beneath the clothes, like a bird settling itself to sleep. She had so gathered the sheets and pillows about her that it would have been very difficult to make out what there was beneath the heap;—only by a few soft sighs issuing from time to time could it have been guessed that it was a young repentant sinner, or at least one extremely sorry at being a sinner in intention only and not in deed,—which was the case with the unfortunate Rosette.

"The brother, having no further anxiety about his sister, resumed the dialogue, and said in a somewhat gentler tone;

'It is not absolutely indispensable to cut each other's throats at once, that is an extreme measure which may be resorted to at any time. Listen:—we are not equally matched. You are in early youth and much less vigorous than I. if we were to fight I should certainly kill you or maim you—and I should not like either to kill or disfigure you—which would be a pity; Rosette, who is over there under the bed-clothes and dose not utter a word, would bear me ill-will for it all her life; for she is as spiteful and wicked as a tigress when she sets about it. the dear little dove. You don't know this, you who are her Prince Galaor, and who receive only charming kindnesses from her; but it is no slight matter. Rosette is free and so are you; it appears that you are not irreconcilable enemies, her widowhood is about to end, and things could not be better. Marry her; she will have no need to return to her own couch, while I shall in this way be freed from the necessity of taking you as a sheath for my sword, which would not be agreeable either for you or for me;—what do you think?'

"I had every reason for making a horrible grimace, for his proposal was of all things in the world the most impracticable for me: I could sooner have walked on all fours on the ceiling, like the flies, or taken down the sun without having a stool to stand on, than do what he asked of me, and yet the last proposition was unquestionably more agreeable than the first.

"He appeared surprised that I did not accept with ecstasy and he repeated what he had said as if to give me time to reply.

"'An alliance with you would be a most honourable one for me, and I should never have dared to pretend to it: I know that it would be an unprecedented piece of good fortune for a youth, who, as yet, has neither rank nor standing in the world, and one that the most illustrious would esteem themselves fortunate to obtain;—but yet I can only persist in my refusal, and, since I am free to choose between a duel and marriage, I prefer the duel. 'Tis a singular taste—and few people would have it—but it is mine.'

"Here Rosette gave the most mournful sob in the world,

put forth her head from beneath the pillow, and seeing my impassible and determined countenance put it in again like a snail whose horns have been struck.

"It is not that I have no love for Madame Rosette, I love her infinitely; but I have reasons for not marrying which you would yourself consider excellent if it were possible for me to tell them to you. Moreover things have not gone so far as appearances might lead one to believe; except a few kisses which a lively friendship is sufficient to explain and to justify, nothing has passed between us that may not be acknowledged, and your sister's virtue is assuredly the most intact and blameless in the world. I owed her this testimony. Now, Seigneur Alcibiades, at what time do we fight, and where?'

"'Here, at once,' cried Alcibiades, intoxicated with rage.

"'Can you think of it? before Rosette!'

"'Draw, villain, or I shall assassinate you,' he continued, brandishing his sword and whirling it around his head.

"'Let us at least leave the room.'

"'If you do not put yourself on guard I will pin you to the wall like a bat, my fine Celadon, and though you may flap your wings to eternity, you will not get free, I give you warning.' And he rushed upon me with his weapon raised.

"I drew my rapier,—for he would have done as he had said,—and at first contented myself with parrying his thrusts.

"Rosette made a superhuman effort to come and throw herself between our swords, for both combatants were equally dear to her; but her strength deserted her, and she rolled senseless on to the foot of the bed.

"Our blades gleamed and made a noise like that of an anvil, for want of space obliged us to engage our swords very closely.

"Two or three times Alcibiades nearly reached me, and had I not been an excellent master of fence my life would have been in the greatest danger; for his skill was astonishing and his strength prodigious. He exhausted all the tricks and feints in fencing to touch me. Enraged at his want of success, he exposed himself twice or thrice; I would not

take advantage of it; but he returned to the attack with such desperate and savage fury, that I was forced to seize upon the opening that he gave me; moreover, the noise and whirling flashes of the steel intoxicated and dazzled me. I did not think of death and had not the least fear; the keen and mortal point which came before my eyes every second had no more effect upon me than if I were fighting with buttoned foils; only I was indignant at Alcibiades's brutality, and my indignation was still further heightened by the consciousness of my perfect innocence. I wished merely to prick him in the arm or shoulder and so make him drop his sword, for I had vainly tried to disarm him. He had a wrist of iron, and the devil could not have made him move it.

"At last he made a thrust so quick and so long that I could only partially parry it; my sleeve was pierced and I felt the chill of the iron on my arm; but I was not wounded. At sight of this I became angry, and instead of defending myself attacked in turn;—I forgot that he was Rosette's brother and I fell upon him as though he had been my mortal enemy. Taking advantage of a mistake in the position of his sword I made so close a flanconnade that I reached his side, and with an 'Oh!' he fell backwards.

"I thought that he was dead but he was really only wounded, and his fall was occasioned by a false step that he had made while trying to defend himself. I cannot express, Graciosa, the sensation that I experienced; certainly, it is not difficult to make the reflection that if you strike flesh with a fine, sharp point, a hole will be pierced and blood will gush out. Nevertheless I was profoundly stupefied on perceiving red streams trickling over Alcibiades's doublet. I, of course, had not thought sawdust would come out as from a burst doll; but I know that never in my life did I experience such great surprise, and it seemed to me that some unheard-of thing had just happened to me.

"The unheard-of thing was not, as it appeared to me, that blood should flow from a wound, but that the wound should have been given by me, and that a young girl of my age (I was going to write 'a young man,' so well have I entered into

the spirit of my part) should have laid low a vigorous captain so well trained in the art of fence as Alcibiades:—and all this, what is more, for the crime of seducing and refusing to marry a very rich and charming woman!

"I was truly in a cruel embarrassment, with the sister in a swoon, the brother, as I believed, dead, and myself nearly swooning or dead like one or other of them. I hung to the bell-rope, chimed loud enough to wake the dead, and, leaving the task of explaining matters to the servants and the old aunt to be performed by the fainting Rosette and the embowelled Alcibiades, went straight to the stable. The air restored me at once: I took out my horse, and saddled and bridled him myself; I ascertained that the crupper was properly fastened and the curb in a right condition: I made the stirrups of equal length, drew the girth a notch tighter:—in a word, I harnessed him with an attention that was at least singular at such a moment, and with a calmness quite inconceivable after a combat terminated in such a way.

"I mounted my beast and crossed the park by a path that I knew. The branches of the trees all laden with dew, lashed my face and wetted it: you would have thought that the old trees were stretching out their arms to stop me and keep me for the love of their mistress. Had I been in a different mood, or at all superstitious, I might have believed that they were so many phantoms who wished to seize me and were showing me their fists.

"But in reality I had not a single idea either of that kind or of any other; a leaden stupor, so great that I was scarcely conscious of it, weighed upon my brain like too tight a helmet; only it did seem to me that I had killed some one yonder and that it was for this that I was going away. I was, moreover, horribly inclined to sleep, whether owing to the lateness of the hour or to the fact that the emotions of the evening had had a physical reaction and had corporally fatigued me.

"I reached a little postern which opened upon the fields in a secret way which Rosette had shown me in our walks. I dismounted, touched the knob and pushed open the door: I regained my saddle after leading my horse through, and put

him to the gallop until I reached the highroad to C——, at which place I arrived at early dawn.

"Such is the very faithful and circumstantial history of my first intrigue and my first duel."

15

"I was very anxious about the wound that I had given Alcibiades; but some days afterwards I was completely reassured, for I learned that it had not been attended by dangerous consequences, and that he was quite convalescent. This relieved me of a singular weight, for the idea of having killed a man tormented me strangely although it had been in lawful self-defence, and against my own wish. I had not yet arrived at that sublime indifference towards men's lives to which I afterwards attained.

"At C—— I again came across several of the young fellows with whom we had travelled. This pleased me; I formed a closer connection with them, and they introduced me into several agreeable houses. I had become completely used to my dress, and the ruder and more active life that I had led, and the violent exercises to which I had devoted myself, had made me twice as robust as I had been before. I followed these mad-caps everywhere; I rode, hunted, had orgies with them, for little by little I had come to drink; without attaining to the perfectly German capacity of some among them, I could empty two or three bottles for my share without getting very tipsy, which was very satisfactory progress. I made verses like a god with extreme copiousness, and kissed inn-servants with sufficient boldness.

"In short, I was an accomplished young cavalier in complete conformity with the last fashionable pattern. I got rid of certain countrified notions that I had had about virtue and other similar tarradiddles; on the other hand, I became so prodigiously delicate in point of honour that I fought a

duel nearly every day: it even became a necessity with me to do so, a sort of indispensable exercise without which I should have felt out of sorts the whole day. Accordingly, when no one had looked at me or trodden on my foot and I had no motive for fighting, rather than remain idle and not exercise myself in fencing, I would act as second to my comrades or even to men whom I knew only by name.

"I had soon a colossal renown for bravery, and nothing short of it was necessary to check the pleasantries which would infallibly have been suggested by my beardless face and effeminate appearance. But two or three superfluous button-holes that I had opened in some doublets, and a few slices that I very delicately cut from some recalcitrant skins, caused my appearance to be generally considered more manly than that of Mars in person or of Priapus himself, and you might have met with people who would have sworn that they had held bastards of mine over the baptismal font.

"Through all this apparent dissipation, amid this riotous, extravagant life, I ceased not to pursue my original idea, that is to say the conscientious study of man and the solution of the great problem of a perfect lover, a problem somewhat more difficult to solve than that of the philosopher's stone.

"So long as I had seen men only at a distance and through the medium of my desire, they had appeared comely to me, and my sight had deceived me. Now I consider them frightful in the highest degree, and do not understand how a woman can admit such a creature into her bed; for my part, it would turn my stomach, and I could never bring myself to it.

"How coarse and ignoble are their lineaments, and how devoid of delicacy and elegance! what unfinished and unpleasing lines! what hard, dark, and furrowed skin! Some are as swarthy as men that had been hanged for six months, emaciated, bony, hairy, with violin-strings on their hands, large drawbridge feet, dirty moustaches always full of food and twirled back to the ears, hair as rough as a broom's bristles, chins ending like boars' heads, lips cracked and dried by strong liquors, eyes surrounded by three or four

dark orbs, necks full of twisted veins, big muscles and prominent cartilages. Others are stuffed with red meat, and push on before them a belly that their waist-belt can scarcely span; they blink as they open their little sea-green eyes inflamed with luxury, and resemble hippopotamuses in breeches rather than human creatures. They always smell either of wine, or brandy, or tobacco, or else of their own natural odour which is the very worst of all. As to those whose forms are somewhat less disgusting, they are like misshapen women. And that is all.

"At first my horror of men was pushed to the last degree of exaggeration, and I looked upon them as dreadful monstrosities. Their modes of thought, their manners and their carelessly cynical language, their brutality and their scorn of women shocked and revolted me extremely, so little did the idea that I had formed of them correspond with the reality. They are not monsters, if you will, but something, on my word, that is much worse! They are capital fellows of very jovial disposition, who eat and drink well, will do you all kinds of services, are good painters and musicians, and are suitable for a thousand things, with, however, the single exception of that one for which they were created, namely, to be the male of the animal called woman, with which they have not the slightest affinity, physical or moral.

"Originally, I could scarcely disguise the contempt with which they inspired me, but by degrees I became accustomed to their manner of life. I was as little annoyed by the jests that they launched against women as if I had myself belonged to their own sex. On the contrary, I made some very good ones, the success of which singularly flattered my pride; certainly none of my comrades went so far as I did in the matter of sarcasm and pleasantries on this subject. My perfect knowledge of the ground gave me a great advantage, and, besides any piquant turn that they might have, my epigrams shone in virtue of an accuracy that was often wanting in theirs. For although all the evil that is said of women has always some foundation, it is nevertheless difficult for men to preserve the composure requisite in order to jest about them well, and there is often a good deal of love in their

invectives.

"I remarked that it was those that were most tender and had most feeling about women who treated them worse than the rest, and who returned to the subject with quite a peculiar bitterness as though they owed them a mortal grudge for not being what they wished them to be, and for falsifying the good opinion they had first formed about them.

"What I desired above all things was not physical beauty, it was beauty of the soul, love; but love, as I am sensible of it, is perhaps beyond human possibilities. And yet it seems to me that I should love in this way, and that I should give more than I require.

Since I have lived with men, I have seen so many women basely betrayed, so many secret connections imprudently divulged, the purest loves dragged carelessly through the mire, young fellows hastening to frightful courtesans on leaving the arms of the most charming mistresses, the most firmly established amours suddenly broken off without any plausible motive, that I now find it impossible to decide on taking a lover. It would be to throw oneself in broad daylight and with open eyes into a bottomless abyss. Nevertheless, the secret desire of my heart is still to have one. The voice of nature stifles the voice of reason. I am quite sensible that I shall never be happy if I cannot love and be loved:—but the misfortune is that only a man can be had as a lover, and if men are not altogether devils, they are very far from being angels. It would be vain for them to stick feathers on their shoulder-blades, and put a glory of gilt paper on their heads: I know them too well to be deceived. All the fine things that they could whisper to me would be of no avail. I know beforehand what they are going to say, and could say it for them.

"Truly, after this, man tempts me but little; for he does not possess beauty like woman, beauty, that splendid garment which so well disguises the imperfections of the soul, that divine drapery cast by God over the nakedness of the world, and which makes it in some measure excusable to love the vilest courtesan of the kennel if she owns this

magnificent and royal gift.

"A soldier would suit me nearly as little; military men have something mechanical in their walk and something bestial in their face which makes me look upon them as scarcely human creatures; gentlemen of the long robe are not more delightful to me, they are dirty, oily, shaggy, threadbare, with glaucous eyes and lipless mouths; they smell immoderately rancid and mouldy, and I should feel no inclination to lay my face against their lynx or badger-like muzzles. As to poets, they think of nothing in the world but the endings of words and go no further back than to the penultimate, and, in truth, are difficult to make use of suitably; they are more wearisome than the others, but they are as ugly and have not the least distinction or elegance in their figure and dress, which is truly singular:—men who are occupied the whole day with form and beauty do not perceive that their boots are badly made and their hats ridiculous! They look like country apothecaries or teachers of learned dogs out of work, and would give you a distaste for poetry and verse for several eternities.

"As for painters, their stupidity also is enormous; they see nothing except the seven colours. One with whom I had spent a few days at R——, and who was asked what he thought of me, made this ingenious reply: 'He is rather warm in tone, and in the shadows pure Naples yellow should be employed instead of white, with a little Cassel ochre and reddish brown.' Such was his opinion, and, moreover, his nose was crooked and his eyes like his nose; which did not improve his chances. Whom shall I take?—a soldier with bulging crop, a limb of the law with convex shoulders, a poet or painter with a wild look, a lean little coxcomb without consistence? Which cage shall I choose in this menagerie? I am quite unable to say; I feel as little inclination in one direction as in another, for they are as perfectly equal in point of foolishness and ugliness as they can possibly be.

"Another alternative would still be open to me, which would be to take any one that I loved though he were a porter or a jockey; but I do not love even a porter. O

unhappy heroine that I am! unmated turtle-dove condemned eternally to utter elegaic cooings!

"Oh! how many times have I wished to be really a man as I appear to be! How many women are there with whom I should have had a fellow-feeling, and whose hearts would have understood mine! how perfectly happy should I have been rendered by those delicacies of love, those noble flights of pure passion to which I could have replied! What sweetness, what delight! how would all the sensitive plants of my soul have bloomed freely without being obliged every minute to contract and close beneath some coarse touch! What charming efflorescence of invisible flowers which will never open, and whose mysterious perfume would have tenderly embalmed the fraternal soul! It seems to me that it would have been an enchanting life, an infinite ecstasy with ever outstretched wings; walks, with hands entwined never releasing their hold, beneath avenues of golden sand, through groves of eternally-smiling roses, in parks full of fish-ponds with gliding swans, and alabaster vases standing out against the foliage.

"Had I been a youth, how I should have loved Rosette! what worship it would have been! Our souls were truly made for each other, two pearls destined to blend together and make but one! How perfectly should I have realised the ideas that she had formed of love! Her character suits me completely, and her style of beauty pleases me. It is a pity that our love should be totally condemned to indispensable platonism!

"An adventure befell me lately.

"I used to visit a house in which there was a charming little girl, fifteen years old at the very most: I have never seen a more adorable miniature. She was fair, but so delicately and transparently fair that ordinary blondes would have appeared excessively brown and as dark as moles beside her; you would have thought that she had golden hair powdered with silver; her eyebrows were of so mild and soft a tint that they were scarcely apparent to the sight; her pale blue eyes had the most velvety look and the most silky lashes imaginable; her mouth,

too small to put the tip of your finger into it, added still further to the childish and exquisite character of her beauty, and the gentle curves and dimples of her cheeks had an ingenuousness that was unspeakably charming. The whole of her dear little person delighted me beyond all expression; I loved her frail, white, little hands through which you could see the light, her bird-like foot which scarcely touched the ground, her figure which a breath would have broken, and her pearly shoulders, little developed as yet, which her scarf, placed awry, happily disclosed.

"Her prattle, in which artlessness imparted fresh piquancy to her natural wit, would engage me for whole hours, and I took singular pleasure in making her talk; she would utter a thousand delicious comicalities, now with extraordinary nicety of intention, and now without having apparently the slightest comprehension of their scope,—which made them a thousand times more attractive. I used to give her bon-bons and lozenges, kept expressly for her in a light tortoise-shell box, which pleased her greatly, for she is dainty like the true little puss that she is. As soon as I arrived she would run up to me and try my pockets to see whether the blissful bon-bon box was there; I would make her run from one hand to the other, and this would occasion a little battle in which she in the end infallibly got the upperhand and completely plundered me.

"One day, however, she contented herself with greeting me in a very grave manner, and did not come as usual to see whether the sweetmeat fountain was still flowing in my pocket: she remained haughtily on her chair, quite upright and with her elbows drawn back.

" 'Well! Ninon,' I said to her, 'have you become fond of salt now, or are you afraid that sweets will make your teeth drop out?' And as I spoke I tapped the box, which gave forth the most honeyed and sugary sound in the world from beneath my jacket.

"She put her little tongue half way out on the edge of her lips as though to taste the ideal sweetness of the absent bon-bon, but she did not stir.

"Then I drew the box from my pocket, opened it, and

began religiously to swallow the burnt almonds of which she was especially fond: the greedy instinct was for a moment stronger than her resolution: she put out her hand to take some and drew it back again immediately, saying, 'I am too big to eat sweets!' And she heaved a sigh.

" 'It did not strike me that you had grown very much since last week; you must be like the mushrooms which spring up in a night. Come and let me measure you.'

" 'Laugh as much as you like,' she rejoined with a charming pout; 'I am no longer a little girl, and I want to grow very big.'

" 'Your resolutions are excellent, and should be adhered to; but might it be known, my dear young lady, what has caused these lofty ideas to come into your head? For, a week ago, you appeared quite content to be small, and crauncbed your burnt almonds without caring very much about compromising your dignity.'

"The little creature looked at me in a singular manner, glanced around her, and, when she had quite satisfied herself that no one could hear us, leaned over towards me in a mysterious fashion and said

" 'I have a lover.'

" 'The deuce! I am no longer surprised that you have ceased to care for lozenges; you were wrong, however, not to take some, for you might have had a doll's dinner-party with him, or exchange them for a shuttlecock.'

"The child made a scornful movement with her shoulders and appeared to look upon me with perfect contempt. As she continued to maintain her attitude of an offended queen I continued:

" 'What is the name of this glorious personage? Arthur, I suppose, or else Henry.' These were two little boys with whom she used to play, and whom she called her husbands.

" 'No, neither Arthur nor Henry,' she said, fixing her clear, transparent eye upon me, 'a gentleman.' She raised her hand above her head to give me an idea of height.

" 'As tall as that? Why, this is getting serious. And who is this tall lover?'

" 'Monsieur Théodore, I will tell you, but you must not

speak about it to any one, neither to mamma, or Polly (her governess), or your friends who think me a child and would make fun of me.'

"I promised the most inviolable secrecy, for I was very curious to know who the gallant personage was, and the child, seeing that I was making fun of the matter, hesitated to take me entirely into her confidence.

"Reassured by the word of honour that I gave her to be carefully silent about it, she left her easy-chair, came and leaned over the back of mine, and whispered the name of the beloved prince very softly in my ear.

"I was confounded: it was Chevalier de G——, a dirty, intractable animal, with the morals of a schoolmaster and the physique of a drum-major, the most intemperate debauchee of a man that could possibly be seen, a genuine satyr, minus the goat's feet and the pointed ears. This inspired me with grave apprehensions for dear Ninon, and I made up my mind to put the matter to rights.

"Some people came in, and the conversation dropped.

"I withdrew into a corner and searched my brain for the means of preventing things from going further, for it would have been quite a sin for so delicate a creature to fall to such an arrant scoundrel.

"The little one's mother was a kind of courtesan who kept gaming tables and had a literary *salon*. Bad verses were read at her house and good money lost, which was a compensation. She had not much love for her daughter, who was, to her, a sort of living baptismal certificate which prevented her falsifying her chronology. Besides, the child was growing up, and her budding charms gave rise to comparisons which were not to the advantage of the prototype already somewhat worn by the action of years and men. The child was accordingly rather neglected, and was left defenceless to the enterprises of the blackguards who frequented the house. If her mother had taken any notice of her, it would probably have been only to profit by her youth and trade on her beauty and innocence. In one way or another the fate that awaited her was not in doubt. This pained me, for she was a charming little creature who

was assuredly deserving of better things, a pearl of the finest water lost in that infectious slough: the thought of it affected me so far that I resolved to get her at all costs out of that frightful house.

"The first thing to be done was to prevent the chevalier from pursuing his design. I thought that the best and simplest way was to pick a quarrel with him and make him fight a duel, and I had all the trouble in the world to do so, for he is as cowardly as he can be and dreads blows more than any one. At last I said so many stinging things to him, that he was obliged to make up his mind to come on the ground, although it was greatly against the grain. I even threatened to have him cudgelled by my footman if he did not put a better face on it. Nevertheless he could handle his sword well enough, but he was so confused by fear that we had hardly crossed our weapons when I was able to administer a nice little thrust which sent him to bed for a fortnight. This satisfied me; I had no wish to kill him, and would as soon have let him live to be hanged later on—a touching attention for which he ought to have been more grateful to me! My rogue being stretched between a pair of sheets and duly trussed with bandelets, it only remained to induce the little one to leave the house, which was not extremely difficult.

"I told her a story about her lover's disappearance, which was giving her extraordinary anxiety. I informed her that he had gone off with an actress belonging to the company then at C——, which, as you may believe, made her very indignant. But I consoled her by speaking ill in every way of the chevalier, who was ugly, drunken, and already old, and I ended by asking her whether she would not rather have me for a wooer. She replied that she would, because I was handsomer, and my clothes were new. This artlessness, spoken with enormous seriousness, made me laugh till I cried. I turned the little one's head and succeeded in inducing her to leave the house. A few bouquets, about as many kisses, and a pearl necklace that I gave her, charmed her to an extent difficult to describe, and she assumed an important air in the presence of her little friends

which was extremely laughable.

"I had a very rich and elegant page's costume of about her size made, for I could not take her away in her girl's dress, unless I myself resumed female attire, which I was unwilling to do. I bought a pony, which was gentle and easy to ride, and yet a sufficiently good courser to follow my barb when it was my pleasure to go quickly. Then I told the fair one to try to come down at dusk to the door, where I would call for her; and this she very punctually did. I found her mounting guard behind the half-opened door. I passed very close to the house; she came out. I stretched out my hand to her, she rested her foot on the tip of mine, and jumped very nimbly up behind me, for she possessed marvellous agility. I spurred my horse, and succeeded in returning home through seven or eight circuitous and deserted lanes without any one seeing us.

"I made her exchange her clothes for her disguise, and myself acted as her maid, at first she made a little fuss, and wished to dress all alone; but I made her understand that this would waste a great deal of time; that, moreover, being my mistress, it was not in the least improper, and that such was the custom between lovers. This was quite enough to convince her, and she yielded to circumstances with the best grace in the world.

"Her body was a little marvel of delicacy. Her arms, which were somewhat thin like those of every young girl, had inexpressible sweetness of line, and her budding breasts gave such charming promise, that none better developed could have sustained a comparison with them. She had still all the graces of the child, and already all the charm of the woman; she was in that adorable transition period when the little girl is blended with the young girl: a blending fugitive and impalpable, a delicious epoch when beauty is full of hope, and when every day, instead of taking something from your love, adds new perfections to it.

"Her costume became her extremely well. It gave her a little unruly air, which was very curious and diverting, and made her burst out laughing when I offered her the glass to

let her judge of the effect of her toilet. I afterwards made her eat some biscuits dipped in Spanish wine, in order to give her courage and enable her better to support the fatigue of the journey.

"The horses were waiting ready saddled in the courtyard; she mounted hers with some deliberation, I bestrode the other, and we set out. Night had completely fallen, and occasional lights, which were being extinguished every moment, showed that the honest town of C—— was virtuously engaged as every country town ought to be on the stroke of nine.

"We could not go very quickly, for Ninon was no better horsewoman than she ought to have been, and when her beast began to trot she would cling with all her might to his mane. However, on the following morning we were too far away to be overtaken, at all events unless extraordinary diligence had been employed; but we were not pursued, or at least, if we were, it was in an opposite direction to that which we had taken.

"I was singularly interested in the little fair one. I no longer had you with me, my dear Graciosa, and I was immensely sensible of the need of loving somebody or something, of having a dog or a child with me to caress familiarly. Ninon was this to me; she shared my bed and put her little arms around my body to go to sleep; she most seriously thought herself my mistress, and had no doubt that I was a man; her great youth and extreme innocence preserved her in this error which I was careful not to dissipate. The kisses that I gave her quite completed her illusion, for her ideas went, as yet, no further, and her desires did not speak loudly enough to cause her to suspect anything else. After all, she was only partly mistaken.

"And, really, there was the same difference between her and me, as there is between myself and men. She was so diaphanous, so slender, so light, of so delicate and choice a nature, that she was a woman even to me who am myself a woman, and who look like a Hercules beside her. I am tall and dark, she is small and blonde; her features are so soft that they make mine appear almost hard and austere, and

her voice is so melodious a warble that mine seems harsh in comparison. If a man had her he would break her in pieces, and I always feel afraid that the wind will carry her off some fine morning. I should like to enclose her in a box of cotton and wear her hanging about my neck. You can have no conception, my dear friend, of her grace and wit, her delicious coaxing, her childlike endearments, her little ways and pretty manners. She is the most adorable creature in existence, and it would have been truly a pity had she remained with her unworthy mother.

"I took a malicious joy in thus depriving men's rapacity of such a treasure. I was the griffin preventing all approach, and, if I did not enjoy her myself, at least no one else enjoyed her—an idea which is always consoling, let all the foolish detractors of egotism say what they will.

"I intended to preserve her in her ignorance as long as possible, and to keep her with me until she was unwilling to stay any longer, or I had succeeded in securing a settlement for her.

"In her boy's dress I took her on all my journeys, right and left; this mode of life gave her singular pleasure, and the charm that she found in it assisted her to endure its fatigues. Everywhere I was complimented on the exquisite beauty of my page, and I have no doubt that it gave many people a precisely contrary idea of what was actually the case. Several even tried to unravel the mystery; but I did not allow the little one to speak to anybody, and the curious were completely disappointed.

"Every day I discovered some new quality in this amiable child which made me cherish her more and congratulate myself on the resolution I had taken. Assuredly men were not worthy to possess her, and it would have been a deplorable thing if so many bodily and spiritual charms had been surrendered to their brutal appetites and cynical depravity.

"Only a woman could love her with sufficient delicacy and tenderness. One side of my character, which could not have been developed in a different connection and which was completely brought out in the present one, is the need and desire of affording protection, a duty which usually belongs

to men. If I had taken a lover it would have displeased me extremely to find him assuming to defend me, for the reason that this is an attention I love to show to those whom I like, and that my pride is much better suited with the first *rôle* than with the second, although the second may be more agreeable. Thus I felt pleased in paying my little darling all the attentions which I ought to have liked to receive, such as assisting her on difficult roads, holding her bridle or stirrup, serving her at table, undressing her and putting her to bed, defending her if any one insulted her; in short, doing everything for her that the most impassioned and attentive lover does for a mistress he adores.

"I was insensibly losing the idea of my sex, and it was with difficulty that I remembered, at considerable intervals, that I was a woman; at first I often forgot myself, and unthinkingly said something that did not harmonise with the coat I wore. Now this never happens, and even when writing to you, to you who are in my secret, I sometimes preserve a useless virility in my adjectives. If ever I take a fancy to go and look for my skirts in the drawer where I left them—which I think very doubtful, unless I fall in love with some young spark—I shall find it difficult to lose these habits, and, instead of being a woman disguised as a man, I shall look like a man disguised as a woman. In truth, neither of the two sexes are mine, I have not the imbecile submission the timidity or the littleness of women; I have not the vices, the disgusting intemperance, or the brutal propensities of men: I belong to a third, distinct sex, which as yet has no name: higher or lower, more defective or superior; I have the body and soul of a woman, the mind and power of a man and I have too much or too little of both to be able to pair with either.

"O Graciosa! I shall never be able completely to love any one, man or woman; an unsated something ever chides within me, and the lover or friend answers only to a single aspect of my character. If I had a lover, the feminine element in me would doubtless for a time dominate over the manly, but this would not last for long, and I feel that I should be only half satisfied; if I have a friend, the

idea of corporeal voluptuousness prevents me from tasting entirely the pure voluptuousness of the soul; so that I know not where to rest, and perpetually waver from one to the other.

"My chimera would be to have both sexes in turn in order to satisfy this double nature: a man to-day, a woman to-morrow, for my lovers I should keep my languorous tenderness, my submissive and devoted ways, my softest caresses, my little sadly-drawn sighs, all the cat-like and woman-like elements in my character; then with my mistresses I should be enterprising, bold, impassioned, with triumphant manners, my hat on my ear, and the style of a boaster and adventurer. My nature would thus be entirely brought out, and I should be perfectly happy, for true happiness consists in the ability to develop freely in every direction and to be all that it is possible to be.

"But these are impossibilities, and are not to be thought of.

"I had carried off the child with the idea of deluding my propensities and turning upon some one all the vague tenderness which floats in my soul and floods it; I had taken her as a sort of escape for my loving faculties; but I soon recognised, in spite of all the affection that I bore her, what an immense void, what a bottomless abyss she left in my heart, and how little her tenderest caresses contented me! I resolved to try a lover, but a long time passed and I met no one who did not displease me. I forgot to tell you that Rosette, having discovered whither I was gone, had written me the most beseeching letter to go and see her; I could not refuse her, and I met her again at a country house where she was. I returned there several times, and even quite lately. Rosette, in despair at not having had me for her lover, had thrown herself into the whirl of society and dissipation, like all tender souls that are not religious and that have been wounded in their first love; she had had many adventures in a short time, and the list of her conquests was already very numerous, for every one had not the same reasons for resisting her that I had.

"She had with her a young man named D'Albert, who was at the time her established lover. I appeared to make quite

a peculiar impression upon him, and at the very first he took a strong liking to me.

"Although he treated Rosette with great deference, and his manners towards her were in the main tender enough, he did not love her,—not owing to satiety or distaste, but rather because she did not correspond to certain ideas, true or false, which he had formed concerning love and beauty. An ideal cloud interposed between him and her, and prevented him from being as happy as otherwise he must have been. Evidently his dream was not fulfilled, and he sighed for something else. But he did not seek for it, and remained faithful to the bonds which weighed on him; for he has more delicacy and honour in his soul than most men, and his heart is very far from being as corrupted as his mind. Not knowing that Rosette had never been in love except with me, and that she was so still, in spite of all her intrigues and follies, he had a dread of distressing her by letting her see that he did not love her. It was this consideration that restrained him, and he was sacrificing himself in the most generous way.

"The character of my features gave him extraordinary pleasure, for he attaches extreme importance to external form; so much so that he fell in love with me in spite of my male attire and the formidable rapier which I wear at my side. I confess that I was grateful to him for the acuteness of his instinct, and that I held him in some esteem for having distinguished me beneath these delusive appearances. At the beginning he believed himself endowed with a fancy far more depraved than it really was, and I laughed inwardly to see him torment himself in this way. Sometimes, when accosting me, he had a frightened look which amused me immensely, and the very natural inclination which drew him towards me appeared to him as a diabolical impulse which could not be too strongly resisted. On such occasions he would fall back furiously upon Rosette, and endeavour to recover more orthodox habits of love, then he would come back to me, of course more inflamed than before.

"Then the luminous idea that I might perhaps be a woman crept into his mind. To convince himself of this he

set himself to observe and study me with the minutest attention; he must be acquainted with every particular hair, and know accurately how many eyelashes I have on my lids; feet, hands, neck, cheeks, the slightest down at the corner of my lips, he examined, compared, and analysed them all, and from this investigation, in which the artist aided the lover, it came out as clear as day (when it is clear), that I was well and duly a woman, and, moreover, his ideal, the type of his beauty, the reality of his dream;—a wonderful discovery!

"It only remained to soften me, and obtain the gift of amorous mercy, to completely establish my sex. A comedy which we acted, and in which I appeared as a woman, quite decided him. I gave him some equivocal glances, and made use of some passages in my part, analogous to our own situation, to embolden him and impel him to declare himself. For, if I did not passionately love him, he pleased me well enough not to let him pine away with love, and, as he was the first since my transformation to suspect that I was a woman, it was quite fair that I should enlighten him on this important point, and I was resolved not to leave him a shadow of doubt.

"Several times he came into my room with his declaration on his lips, but he dared not utter it; for, indeed, it is difficult to speak of love to one who is dressed like yourself, and is trying on riding boots. At last, unable to take it upon himself to do this, he wrote me a long, very Pindaric letter, in which he explained to me at great length what I knew better than he did.

"I do not quite know what I ought to do. Admit his request or reject it,—the latter would be immoderately virtuous; besides, his grief at finding himself refused would be too great: if we make people who love us unhappy, what are we to do to those who hate us? Perhaps it would be more strictly becoming to be cruel for a time, and wait at least a month before unhooking the tigress's skin to dress after the human fashion in a chemise. But, since I have resolved to yield to him, immediately is as good as later; I do not well understand those mathematically graduated resistances which

surrender one hand to-day, the other to-morrow, then the waist and the neck, and next submit the lips to a lover's kisses; nor those intractable virtues which are always ready to hang themselves to the bell-rope if you pass by a hair's-breadth beyond the territory which they have resolved to grant on that day. It makes me laugh to see those methodical Lucretias walking backwards with the tokens of the most maidenly terror, and from time to time casting a furtive glance over their shoulder to make sure that the sofa on which they are to faint is quite directly behind them. I could never be as careful as that.

"I do not love D'Albert, at least in the sense which I give to the word, but I have certainly a liking and an inclination for him, his mind pleases me and his person does not repel me: there are not many people of whom I can say as much. He has not everything, but he has something; what pleases me in him is that he does not seek to satiate himself brutally like other men; he has a perpetual aspiration and an ever sustained breathing after beauty,—after material beauty alone, it is true, but still it is a noble inclination, and one which is sufficient to keep him in pure regions. His conduct towards Rosette proves honesty of heart, an honesty rarer than the other, if that be possible.

"And then, if I must tell you, I am possessed with the most violent desires,—I am languishing and dying of voluptuousness; for the dress I wear, while involving me in all sorts of adventures with women, protects me only too perfectly against the enterprises of men; an idea of pleasure which is never realised floats vaguely through my head, and this dull, colourless dream wearies and annoys me. So many women placed amid the chastest surroundings lead the most immoral lives, while I, by a somewhat facetious contrast, remain chaste and virgin like cold Diana herself, in the midst of the most disordered dissipation and surrounded by the greatest debauchees of the century.

"This bodily ignorance unaccompanied by ignorance of the mind is the most miserable thing in existence. That my flesh may have no cause to assume airs over my soul, I am anxious to know a man completely and all that his love is

capable of. Since D'Albert has recognised me beneath my disguise, it is quite fair that he should be rewarded for his penetration; he was the first to divine that I was a woman, and I shall prove to him to the best of my ability that his suspicions were well founded. I would be scarcely charitable to let him believe that his fancy was solely a monstrous one.

"D'Albert it is, then, who will solve my doubts and give me my first lesson in love: the only question now is to bring the matter about in quite a poetical fashion. I am inclined not to reply to his letter and to look coldly on him for a few days. When I see him very sad and despairing, inveighing against the gods, shaking his fist at creation, and looking down the wells to see whether they are not too deep to throw himself into them,—I shall retire like Peau d'Ane to the end of the corridor, and put on my light-blue dress, that is to say my costume as Rosalind: for my feminine wardrobe is very limited. Then I shall go to him as radiant as a peacock displaying its feathers, with but a very low and loose lace tucker, partially unveiling those attractions which I usually conceal with the greatest care, and shall say to him in the most pathetic tone that I can assume—

" 'O most elegaic and perspicacious young man! I am truly a young and modest beauty, one who adores you into the bargain, and humbly asks to share your pleasures with you. Tell me whether this suits you, or if you feel any scruples in according her what she wishes.

"This fine discourse ended, I shall let myself fall half-swooning into his arms, and, heaving melancholy sighs, shall skilfully cause the hook of my dress to come undone so that I shall still further disclose certain of my charms. The rest I shall leave to chance, and I hope that on the following morning I shall know what to think of all those fine things which have been troubling my brain for so long. While satisfying my curiosity, I shall have the further pleasure of making some one happy.

"I also propose to go and pay a vist to Rosette in the same costume, and to show her that, if I have not responded to her love, it was not from coldness or distaste. I do not

wish her to preserve such a bad opinion of me, and she deserves, equally with D'Albert, that I should betray my incognito in her favour. How will she look at this revelation? Her pride will be consoled by it, but her love will lament it.

"Good-bye, most fair and good one; pray to heaven that I may not think as little of the pleasure as I do of those who afford it. I have jested throughout this letter, and yet what I am going to essay is a serious matter and something which may affect the rest of my life."

16

It was already more than a fortnight since D'Albert had laid his amorous epistle on Théodore's table, and yet there seemed to be no change in the manner of the latter. D'Albert did not know how to account for this silence; one would have imagined that Théodore had had no knowledge of the letter; the rueful D'Albert thought that it had gone astray or been lost; yet this was difficult of explanation, for Théodore had re-entered his room a moment afterwards, and it would have been very extraordinary if he had not perceived a large paper placed quite by itself in the middle of a table so as to attract the notice of the most inattentive.

Or was Théodore perhaps really a man and not a woman at all, as D'Albert had imagined to himself? or, supposing her a woman, had she so decided a feeling of aversion to him, or such a contempt for him that she would not condescend even to take the trouble of giving him a reply? The poor young man who had not, like ourselves, the advantage of searching the portfolio of Graciosa, the confidante of the fair Mademoiselle de Maupin, was not in a position to decide any of these important questions either in the affirmative or in the negative, and he was mournfully

wavering in the most wretched irresolution.

One evening D'Albert was thinking as sadly as a disappointed man can think at five o'clock on a misty autumn evening with a somewhat sharp north wind for music, and the wigless skeleton of a forest for a prospect.

He thought of throwing himself into the river, but the water seemed very black and cold to him, and the swan's example only half persuaded him; of blowing his brains out, but he had neither pistol nor powder, and he would have been very sorry to have had them, of taking a new mistress, or, sinister resolution, even two! but he knew none who would suit him, even none who would not suit him. In his despair he went so far as to wish to resume his connection with women who were perfectly insupportable to him, and whom he had had horsewhipped out of his house by his footman. He ended by resolving upon something much more frightful,—to write a second letter.

O sextuple booby!

He was at this stage in his meditations, when he felt a hand place itself on his shoulder, like a little dove descending on a palm-tree. The comparison halts somewhat inasmuch as D'Albert's shoulder bore a very slight resemblance to a palm-tree, but, all the same, we shall keep it in a spirit of pure Orientalism.

The hand was at the extremity of an arm which corresponded to a shoulder forming part of a body, which was nothing else but Théodore-Rosalind, Mademoiselle d'Aubigny, or Madelaine de Maupin, to call her by her real name.

Who was astonished? Neither I nor you, for you and I had long been prepared for this visit; but D'Albert who had not been expecting it in the least. He gave a little cry of surprise half-way between oh! and ah! Nevertheless I have the best reasons for believing that it was more like ah! than oh!

It was indeed Rosalind, so beautiful and radiant that she lit up the whole room, with her strings of pearls in her hair, her prismatic dress, her laces, her red-heeled shoes, her handsome fan of peacock's plumes, such, in short, as she

had been on the day of the performance. Only,—and this was an important and decisive difference,—she wore neither gorget, nor chemisette, nor ruff, nor anything that effectually hided those two charming, unfriendly brothers, who, alas! have only too often a tendency to become reconciled.

A lovely, panting bosom, white, transparent, like an ancient marble, of the purest and most exquisite cut, projected boldly from a very low dress body, and seemed to bid defiance to kisses. It was a most reassuring sight; accordingly D'Albert was very quickly reassured, and he abandoned himself in all confidence to his most disorderly emotions.

"Well! Orlando, do you not recognise your Rosalind?" said the fair one with the most charming smile; "or have you, perhaps, left your love hanging with your sonnets on some bushes in the forest of Arden? Are you really cured of the sickness for which you requested a remedy from me with such earnestness? I am very much afraid so."

"Oh no! Rosalind, I am more sick than ever. I am in extremity; I am dead, or very nearly!"

"You have not a bad appearance for a dead man; many living persons do not look so well."

"What a week I have spent! You cannot imagine it, Rosalind. I hope that it will be equivalent to a thousand years of purgatory to me in the next world. But, if I dare ask you, why did you not reply to me sooner?"

"Why? I scarcely know, unless it be just because I did not. However, if this motive does not appear a valid one to you, here are three others not nearly so good, from which you shall choose; first, because carried away by your passion you forgot to write legibly, and it took me more than a week to make out what your letter was about; next, because my modesty could not reconcile itself in a shorter time to such an absurd idea as to take a dithyrambic poet for a lover; and then because I was not sorry to see whether you would blow your brains out, or poison yourself with opium, or hang yourself with your garter. There!"

"Naughty banterer! I assure you that you have done well to come to-day, for perhaps you would not have found me

to-morrow."

"Really! poor fellow! Do not assume such a doleful air, I should also be affected, and that would make me more stupid in myself alone than all the animals that were in the ark with the deceased Noah. If once I open the sluice for my sensibility, I warn you that you will be drowned. Just now I gave you three bad reasons, I now offer you three good kisses; will you accept them, on the condition that you forget the reasons for the kisses? I owe you quite as much as that and more."

As she uttered these words the fair infanta advanced towards the mournful lover, and threw her beautiful arms round his neck. D'Albert kissed her effusively on the cheeks and mouth. This last kiss had a longer duration than the others, and might have been counted as four. Rosalind saw that all that she had done until then had been only pure childishness. Her debt discharged, she sat down, still greatly moved, on D'Albert's knees, and, passing her fingers through his hair, she said to him—

"All my cruelties are exhausted, sweet friend; I took the fortnight to satisfy my natural ferocity; I will confess to you that I found it long. Don't become a coxcomb because I am frank, but it is true. I place myself in your hands, revenge yourself for my past harshness. If you were a fool I should not say this, or even anything else to you, for I do not like fools. It would have been very easy for me to make you believe that I was prodigiously shocked by your boldness, and that all your Platonic sighs and your most quintessential nonsense were not sufficient to procure you forgiveness for a thing of which I was very glad; I might, like another, have bargained with you for a long time and retailed to you what I am now granting you freely and at once; but I do not think that this would have increased your love for me by the thickness of a single hair.

"I do not ask of you an oath of eternal love nor any exaggerated protestation. Love me as much as heaven ordains —I will do as much on my side. I will not call you a traitor or a wretch when you have ceased to love me. You will also have the kindness to spare me the corresponding odious

titles, should I happen to leave you. I shall be merely a woman who has ceased to love you,—nothing more. It is not necessary to hate each other all through life because of a night or two passed together. Whatever may happen, and wherever destiny may drive me, I swear to you, and this is a promise that can be kept, that I shall always preserve a charming recollection of you, and, that if I am no longer your mistress, I shall be your friend as I have been your comrade. For you I have laid aside my male attire to-night; I shall resume it to-morrow for all. Think that I am only Rosalind at night, and that throughout the day I am and can be only Théodore de Sérannes——"

The sentence she was about to utter was stifled by a kiss followed by many others, which were no longer counted and of which we shall not give an exact catalogue, because it would certainly be rather tedious and perhaps very immoral—for some people; as to ourselves, we think nothing more moral and sacred under heaven than the caresses of man and woman, when both are handsome and young.

As D'Albert's importunities became more amorous and eager, Théodore's beautiful face, instead of being smiling and radiant, assumed an expression of proud melancholy which caused her lover some disquiet.

"Why, dear sovereign, have you the chaste and serious air of an antique Diana now, when we should rather have the smiling lips of Venus rising from the sea?"

"You see, D'Albert, it is because I am more like the huntress Diana than anything else. When very young I assumed man's attire for reasons which it would be tedious and useless to tell you. You alone have divined my sex, and, if I have made conquests, they have only been over women, —very superfluous conquests, which have embarrassed me more than once. In a word, although it is an incredible and ridiculous thing, I am virgin,—as virgin as the snow on Himalaya, as the Moon before she had lain with Endymion, as Mary before she had made the acquaintance of the divine pigeon, and I am grave as every one is when about to do a thing on which it is impossible to go back. It is a metamor-

phosis, a transformation that I am about to undergo; to change the name of girl into the name of woman, no longer to have to-morrow what I had yesterday: something that I did not know and that I am going to learn, an important page turned in the book of life. It is for that reason that I look sad, my friend, and not on account of any fault of yours."

As she said this she parted the young man's long hair with her two beautiful hands, and laid her softly puckered lips upon his pale forehead.

D'Albert, singularly moved by the gentle and solemn tone in which she uttered this long speech, took her hands and kissed the fingers one after another; then very delicately broke the lacing of her dress so that the body opened and the two white treasures appeared in all their splendour: upon the bosom which was as sparkling and as clear as silver bloomed the two beautiful roses of paradise. He pressed their vermilion points lightly in his mouth, and thus went over the whole outline. Rosalind submitted with exhaustless complaisance, and tried to return his caresses as exactly as possible.

"You must find me very awkward and cold, my poor D'Albert; but I scarcely know how to set about it. You will have a great deal to do to teach me, and really I am imposing a very laborious task upon you."

D'Albert made the simplest reply, he did not reply at all; and, straining her in his arms with fresh passion, he covered her bare shoulders and breasts with kisses. The hair of the half-swooning infanta became loosened and, her dress fell to her feet as though by enchantment. She remained quite upright like a white apparition in a simple chemise of the most transparent linen. The blissful lover knelt down, and had soon thrown the two pretty little red-heeled shoes into an opposite corner of the apartment; the stockings with embroidered clocks followed close after them.

The chemise, gifted with a happy spirit of imitation, did not remain long behind the dress; it first slipped from the shoulders without there being any thought of checking it; then, taking advantage of a moment when the arms were

perpendicular, it very cleverly came off them and rolled as far as the hips whose undulating outline partially checked it. Rosalind then perceived the perfidiousness of her last garment, and raised her knee a little to prevent it from falling altogether. In this pose she was exactly like those marble statues of goddesses whose intelligent drapery, sorry to cover up so many charms, envelops them with regret, and by a happy piece of treachery stops just below the part that it is intended to conceal. But, as the chemise was not of marble and its folds did not support it, it continued its triumphant descent, sank down altogether upon the dress, and lay round about its mistress's feet like a large white greyhound.

There was certainly a very simple means of preventing all this disorder, namely, to check the fugitive with the hand; this idea, natural as it was, did not occur to our modest heroine.

She remained, then, without any covering, her fallen garments forming a sort of pedestal for her, in all the diaphanous splendour of her beautiful nakedness, beneath the soft light of an alabaster lamp which D'Albert had lighted.

D'Albert, who was dazzled, gazed upon her with rapture.

"I am cold," she said, crossing her hands upon her shoulders.

"Oh! pray! one minute more!"

Rosalind uncrossed her hands, leant the tip of her finger upon the back of an easy-chair and stood motionless; she gave a slight movement to her hips in such a way as to bring out all the richness of the waving line; she did not appear at all embarrassed, and the imperceptible rose of her cheeks was not a shade deeper: only the somewhat quickened beating of her heart caused the outline of her left breast to tremble.

The young enthusiast for beauty could not sufficiently feast his eyes on such a spectacle; we must say, to Rosalind's boundless praise, that this time the reality was beyond his dream, and that he did not experience the slightest deception.

Everything was united in the beautiful form standing be-

fore him—delicacy and strength, grace and colour, the lines of a Greek statue of the best period and the tone of a Titian. There he saw, palpable and crystallised, the cloudy chimera that he had so often vainly sought to stay in its flight; he was not obliged, in the manner he used to complain of to friend Silvio, to limit his gaze to a certain fairly well-formed part and not stray beyond it, on pain of seeing something frightful, and his amorous eyes passed down from the head to the feet and ascended again from the feet to the head, and was ever sweetly soothed by a correct and harmonious form.

The limbs were proudly and superbly turned, the knees were admirably pure, the ankles elegant and slender, the arms and shoulders of the most magnificent character, the skin as lustrous as an agate, the bosom enough to make gods come down from heaven to kiss it; a torrent of beautiful brown hair slightly crisped, such as we see on the heads by the old masters, fell in little waves along an ivory back whose whiteness it brought out in wonderful relief.

The painter satisfied, the lover resumed the ascendancy; for, whatever love a man may have for art, there are things that he cannot long be satisfied with looking at.

He took up the fair one in his arms and bore her to the couch. In an instant he undressed and flung himself beside her.

The girl pressed herself against him and embraced him closely, for her two breasts were as cold and as white as snow. This purity of skin aroused D'Albert and excited him to the highest pitch. Soon she too became inflamed. He began to caress her most ardently and madly—chest shoulders, neck, mouth, arms, legs. He longed to cover with a single kiss her entire beautiful body, which was melting into his, so close was their embrace. In this wealth of charming treasures, he did not know which to attain first.

All their kisses became one, and Rosalind's perfumed lips were joined to D'Albert's to make a single mouth. Their chests were expanded, their eyes half closed; their arms, exhausted by passion no longer, had the strength to press their bodies to each other. The divine moment approached.

A supreme spasm convulsed the two lovers, and the curious Rosalind became as enlightened as possible on a matter which had so deeply perplexed her.

Still, one lesson, no matter how intelligent one may be, cannot suffice; D'Albert gave her a second, then a third. Out of consideration for the reader, whom we do not wish to humiliate and discourage, we shall not carry this description too far.

Our fair reader would possibly pout at her lover if we revealed to her the sum total of the lessons imparted by D'Albert's love, assisted by Rosalind's curiosity. Let her recall the best occupied and most charming of her nights, the night which would be remembered a hundred thousand days, did not death come before; let her lay her book aside and compute on the tips of her pretty white fingers how many times she was loved by him who loved her most, and thus fill up the void left by us in this glorious history.

Rosalind was prodigiously apt, and made enormous progress in that single night. The ingenuousness of body which was astonished at everything, and the rakishness of mind which was astonished at nothing, formed the most piquant and adorable contrast. D'Albert was ravished, distracted, transported, and would have wished the night to last forty-eight hours, like that in which Hercules was conceived. However, towards morning, in spite of a multitude of kisses, caresses, and the most amorous endearments in the world, well adapted to keep one awake, he finlly found himself obliged to take some little repose. A soft and voluptuous sleep touched his eyes with the tip of its wing, his head drooped, and he slumbered between the breasts of his beautiful mistress. The latter contemplated him for some time with an air of melancholy and profound thought; then, as the dawn shot its whitish rays through the curtains, she gently raised him, laid him beside her, stood up, and passed lightly over his body.

She went to her clothes and dressed again in haste, then returned to the bed, leaned over D'Albert who was still asleep, and kissed both his eyes on their long and silky lashes. This done, she withdrew backwards, still looking

at him.

Instead of returning to her own room she entered Rosette's. What she there said and did I have never been able to ascertain, although I have made the most conscientious researches. Neither in Graciosa's papers, nor in those belonging to D'Albert and Silvio, have I found anything having relation to this visit. Only, a maid of Rosette's informed me of the following singular circumstance: although her mistress had not slept with her lover that night, the bed was disturbed and tossed and bore the impress of two bodies. Further, she showed me two pearls, exactly similar to those worn in his hair by Théodore when acting the part of Rosalind. She had found them in the bed when making it. I leave this remark to the reader's sagacity, and give him liberty to draw thence any inferences that he likes; for myself, I have made a thousand conjectures about it, each more unreasonable than the rest, and so absurd that I really dare not write them even in the most virtuously periphrastic style.

It was quite noon when Théodore left Rosette's room. He did not appear at dinner or supper. D'Albert and Rosette did not seem at all surprised at this. He went to bed very early, and the following morning, as soon as it was light, without giving any notice to any one, he saddled his page's horse and his own, and left the mansion, telling a footman that they were not to wait dinner for him, and that he might perhaps not return for a few days.

D'Albert and Rosette were extremely astonished, and did not know how to account for this strange disappearance, especially D'Albert, who decidedly thought that his behaviour on the first night had entitled him to a second. Towards the end of the week, the unhappy disappointed lover received from Théodore a letter, which we shall transcribe. I am afraid that it will satisfy neither my male nor my female readers; but the letter was in truth none other than that which follows, and this glorious romance will have no other conclusion.

17

"You are no doubt greatly surprised, my dear D'Albert, at what I have just done after acting as I did. I will allow you to be so, for you have reason. The odds are that you have already bestowed upon me at least twenty of the epithets that we had agreed to erase from our vocabulary—perfidious, inconstant, wicked,—is it not so? At least you will not call me cruel or virtuous, and that is something gained. You curse me, and you are wrong. You desired me, you loved me, I was your ideal;—very well. I at once granted you what you asked; it was your own fault that you did not have it sooner. I served as a body for your dream as compliantly as possible. I gave you what assuredly I shall never again give to any one, a surprise on which you hardly counted and for which you ought to be more grateful to me. Now that I have satisfied you, it pleases me to go away. What is there so monstrous in this?

"You have been with me entirely and unreservedly for a whole night; what more would you have? Another night, and then another; you would even make free with the days if need were. You would go on in this way until you were surfeited with me. I can hear you from this crying out most gallantly that I am not one of those with whom surfeit is possible. Good gracious! I am like the rest.

"It would last six months, two years, ten years even, if you will, but still everything must have an end. You would keep me from a kind of feeling of propriety, or because you would not have the courage to give me my dismissal. What would be the use of waiting until matters came to this?

"And then, it might perhaps be myself who would cease to love you. I have found you charming; perhaps, by dint of seeing you, I might have come to find you detestable. Forgive me this supposition. Living with you in close intimacy, I should no doubt have had occasion to see you in a cotton

cap or in some ridiculous or facetious domestic situation. You would necessarily have lost the romantic and mysterious side which allures me more than anything else, and your character, when better understood, would no longer have appeared so strange to me. I should have been less taken up with you through having you beside me, in something like the fashion in which we treat those books that we never open because they are in our libraries. Your nose or your wit would no longer have seemed nearly so well turned; I should have perceived that your coat did not fit you and that your stockings were untidy; I should have had a thousand deceptions of this kind which would have given me singular pain, and at last I should have come to this conclusion: that you decidedly had neither heart nor soul, and that I was destined to be misunderstood in love.

"You adore me and I you. You have not the slightest reproach to make against me, and I have nothing in the world to complain of in you. I have been perfectly faithful to you throughout our amour. I have deceived you in nothing. I had neither false bosom nor false virtue; you had the extreme kindness to tell me that I was yet more beautiful than you had imagined. For the beauty that I gave you, you repaid me with pleasure; we are quits.—I go my way and you yours, and perhaps we shall meet again at the Antipodes. Live in this hope.

"You believe, perhaps, that I do not love you because I am leaving you. Later, you will recognise the truth of the contrary. Had I valued you less, I should have remained, and would have poured out to you the insipid beverage to the dregs. Your love would soon have died of weariness; after a time you would have quite forgotten me, and, as you read over my name on the list of your conquests, would have asked yourself: 'Now, who the deuce was she?' I have at least the satisfaction of thinking that you will remember me sooner than another. Your unsated desire will again spread its wings to fly to me; I shall ever be to you something desirable to which your fancy will love to return, and I hope that in the arms of the mistresses you may have, you will sometimes think of the unrivalled night you spent with

me.

"Never will you be more amiable than you were that blissful evening, and, even were you equally so, it would still be something less; for in love, as in poetry, to remain at the same point is to go back. Keep to that impression, and you will do well.

'You have rendered the task of the lovers I may have (if I have other lovers) a difficult one, and no one will be able to efface the memory of you;—they will be the heirs of Alexander.

"If you are too much grieved at losing me, burn this letter, which is the only proof that you have possessed me and you will believe that you have had a beautiful dream. What is there to hinder you? The vision has vanished before the light, at the hour when dreams return home through the horn or the ivory gate. How many have died who, less fortunate than you, have not even given a single kiss to their chimera!

"I am neither capricious, nor mad, nor a conceited prude. What I am doing is the result of profound conviction. It is not in order to inflame you more, or from calculating coquetry that I have gone away from C——; do not try to follow me or to find me again: you will not succeed. My precautions to conceal from you all traces of myself have been too well taken; you will always be for me the man who opened up to me a world of new sensations. These are things that a woman does not easily forget. Though absent, I shall often think of you, oftener than if you were with me.

"Comfort poor Rosette as well as you can, for she must be at least as sorry for my departure as you are. Love each other well in memory of me, whom both of you have loved, and breathe my name sometimes in a kiss."

J-29

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